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It remains to be seen if House Judiciary Chairman [Bob Goodlatte](#)'s immigration bill will get a floor vote. But the Virginia Republican is staying responsive to ag concerns and made several amendments last week that are aimed at the H-2A guestworker program overhaul portion of the immigration bill. Many Republicans - namely Freedom Caucus Chairman [Mark Meadows](#) - are pushing for Goodlatte's bill, and it has garnered the support of Perdue.

Perdue, during his California tour this week, said immigration reform was the "obvious answer" in the face of agricultural labor shortages and growing uncertainty for immigrant workers. He said Goodlatte's bill that would include a provision creating a long-term path to citizenship.

"I don't know if we can do that in the current environment or not - I don't know whether there's an environment where we can," Perdue said, the Los Angeles Times [reported](#).

Last month, Perdue expressed concern that if Goodlatte's bill was not part of a broader immigration package, he didn't see another opportunity in the near future to address labor shortages.

Goodlatte's changes: The [proposed changes](#) would offer farmers more time to comply with mandatory E-Verify, which requires employers to electronically check that all hired workers are legal. It also addresses concerns that the maximum visa term is insufficient - extending the visa term from 18 months to 24 months -- a move that would also increase the number of visa recipients that can be in the program after the first year.

Refresher on the bill: The proposed legislation would scrap the current H-2A program, partially housed in the Labor Department, in favor of an H-2C program that would be handled by the USDA. The bill would allow agricultural employers - such as meat processors, dairy farmers and loggers - in need of year-round work to apply. This is a sharp difference from the current program that offers guest-worker visas for temporary or seasonal agricultural jobs that last under 10 months.

California ag challenges industry support: California Farm Bureau announced earlier this week that it could not support Goodlatte's legislation - saying it "would actually worsen chronic agricultural employee shortages." This move to push back on the bill comes after the largest agricultural groups, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, have offered support for the legislation.

"As now written, the AG Act just wouldn't work for California farms and ranches," said Jamie Johansson, president of the California Farm Bureau, adding that the organization is offering its own recommendation on how to create a more practical program.

Farm Bureau's position: American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall, however, is calling on lawmakers to support the bill that would create a new H-2C program that's "far superior" to the existing program.

"We are at a crisis point in agriculture," Duvall said in a Tuesday statement. "For farmers in sectors like dairy, mushrooms and others, who are excluded from H-2A and have nowhere else to turn, the H-2C program offers a path forward in meeting their future labor needs."