

Senate supports temporary visa program

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Senate rejected an amendment Tuesday that would have removed the guest-worker program from a comprehensive immigration reform bill.

The amendment sponsored by Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Byron Dorgan, D-N.C., failed 64-31, Fox News reported. Many Democrats joined Republicans in opposition to eliminating the provision to give two-year visas to 400,000 low-wage temporary workers.

Another amendment, sponsored by Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., would cut the number of visas to 200,000 and may have broader support. It has won the backing of Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

Boxer argued that allowing entrance to temporary workers leads to lower wages and bad conditions for U.S. workers. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who voted against the amendment, pointed to a recent raid on a factory in New Bedford, Mass., where illegal immigrants worked in bad conditions. Kennedy said that without temporary visas workers will cross the border illegally, leaving them with no protection.

The Senate plans two weeks of debate on the bill, interrupted by a week of vacation. The bill, which has opponents on both left and right, is not certain of passage.

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