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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

In the decade since enactment of the "Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act of 1963," it became apparent that the law did not adequately protect migrant farm workers from various abuses. For about a year, the Administration has worked with the Congress to develop legislation to improve the Act. There has been give and take on all sides. I am pleased that this cooperation has greatly strengthened the Act.

On October 29, 1974, I vetoed a similar bill, H. R. 13342. It contained an objectionable rider entirely unrelated to improving the working conditions of migrant workers. The rider would have changed the classifications of certain Department of Labor administrative law judges, members of the Benefits Review Board, and other persons in no way involved with migrant workers. At that time, I urged the Congress to reenact this legislation without the objectionable rider. I am very pleased that it has done so.

This legislation, S. 3202, makes a number of improvements in the Act, including the following:

- The Act's coverage is expanded. Under existing law, a crew leader has to be recruiting migrant workers on an interstate basis--10 or more workers at any one time--before being required to register as a farm labor contractor. This bill removes these restrictions except with respect to those operating with a 25-mile intrastate radius of their homes and for 13 weeks a year or less. This provides protection for many more migrant workers under the Act.
- Sanctions against violators are expanded. The only penalty which may be imposed against crew leaders who violate the present law is a \$500 fine. It has been relatively ineffective against violations. This legislation adds a jail sentence of up to one year to the present \$500 criminal fine, and a maximum fine of \$10,000 as well as a maximum three-year jail sentence for subsequent violations--including unregistered crew leaders who knowingly recruit illegal aliens. The Labor Department is now authorized additionally to seek injunctions and assess administrative civil money penalties. Private individuals also have the right to bring civil suits. Those discriminated against are offered means to exercise their rights under the Act. The Labor Department is also given increased investigatory authority. In short, crew leaders now have greater responsibilities toward the migrant workers they recruit.
- Other leaders' responsibilities are increased. Under this legislation, crew leaders must obtain increased vehicle insurance coverage, and provide transportation and housing which satisfy State and Federal health and safety requirements. Crew leaders must make a complete employment disclosure to the migrant workers they recruit. This disclosure must now be written, and in a language in which the workers are fluent.

(MORE)

(OVER)

-- The Act prohibits use of unregistered crew leaders and calls for improved record keeping.

I strongly believe that these and the other amendments to the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act will go a long way toward improving the working conditions of our Nation's migrant farm workers. I therefore am pleased to have signed into law the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act Amendments of 1974

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