Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 16, 2005

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Madam Secretary:

We are writing to strongly urge the Department of Labor to continue the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) and rescind the stop-work order regarding the field surveys for the upcoming season.

The NAWS is one of the very few sources of solid information about migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The demographic and other information provided by NAWS offers a useful portrait of the nation's farmworkers that is not available in any other study. Its findings provide the public and policy makers with important information related to employment, immigration, health, public benefits, education, and wages and income. In the absence of the NAWS, the public and policy makers would be forced to rely on other data, much of which contains misleading conclusions about such basic issues as the race, ethnicity, national origin, wages, amount of work and immigration status.

The NAWS is especially necessary as we confront challenges posed by an increasingly global economy marked by expanded agricultural trade, greater labor migration, the need for continuing recent increases in agricultural-worker productivity, and efforts to reduce poverty. In the presence of a major debate regarding immigration policy, it is especially important that the Department continue the ongoing study of changes in the farmworker population, including immigration status of farmworkers. The study should not be interrupted with a lapse in the surveys.

The relatively small investment in NAWS has yielded major results and should continue. We understand that there have been discussions regarding a shift of the NAWS to other agencies but we believe the best approach would be to continue to house the study in the Department of Labor because this is fundamentally an issue about workers and their working and living conditions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pelosi

Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader

George Miller

George Miller
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce

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Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Government Reform

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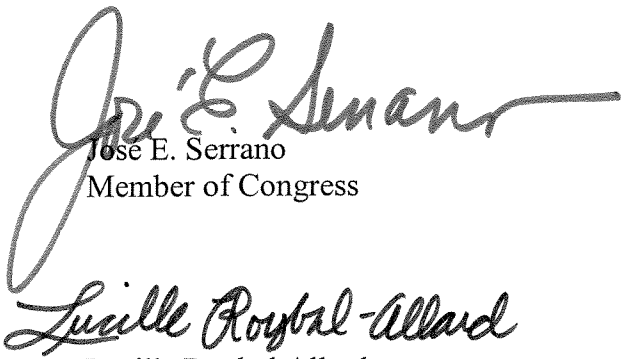

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Hilda L. Solis
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal Allard
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Veronica Vargas Stidvent
Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy