

New Guest Worker Visa Won't be Ready This Season

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

We continue our series this week with Senator Mark Begich discussing fishing industry issues from the Boston Seafood Show. Today, he talks about the replacement for the J-1, or foreign student workers visa bill, which he calls "H-2-O";

He introduced the legislation this week, but says it will not likely help processors this summer. That's because it's part of a larger piece of legislation, the new immigration reform bill, which, because of its controversial nature, will not likely sail through Congress smoothly.

Begich went on to say the new H2O Visa will differ significantly from the law it replaces in that it is only for the commercial fishing industry.

Begich is confident that there will be enough lead time for recruiters to line up workers — made up mostly by foreign college students on summer vacation — before the salmon season begins next year. Tomorrow we'll wrap up our conversation with Senator Begich and find out why he thinks weather forecasts in Alaska may be compromised for a few years.