



STATEMENT
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AN UNNOTICED REVOLUTION

BUSINESS IMMIGRATION ADVOCACY

WASHINGTON – This week, the Americans for Reform coalition is bringing 300 center-right Americans – business owners, faith leaders, law enforcement officials and others – to Washington to urge Congress to act on immigration reform. ImmigrationWorks USA president Tamar Jacoby commented on the gathering.

ImmigrationWorks USA is proud to be part of the coalition that's orchestrating the fly-in, proof positive, at just the right moment, that immigration reform is not a left or right issue. Conservatives too understand that the system is broken and ill serves the nation, undermining our prosperity, our security, our values and the rule of law.

The fly-in is also dramatic evidence of how much has changed in the years since Congress last considered immigration, when employers who rely on immigrant workers were largely absent from the debate.

In 2006 and 2007, business voices were few and far between. Bill Gates wrote an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post*. J.W. Marriott Jr. gave a speech at a meeting of hotel executives. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other trade groups worked the issue quietly, behind the scenes. But apart from Gates and Marriott, virtually no employers spoke out publicly in favor of immigration or an immigration overhaul.

Public business support was so rare that when one brave soul – a small landscaping contractor from California – finally raised his head above the trench line, appearing on television in Washington in an ad sponsored by a trade group, the *Wall Street Journal* published a front-page story. In it, the landscaper drove home the point by comparing himself to former presidential candidate Bob Dole. "How would you like to have been the first guy to talk about your erectile dysfunction?" he asked. "That's a good analogy" for speaking out in public about hiring immigrants.

This year, in contrast, employers have been among the most visible and vocal proponents of change. Some of the nation's best known business leaders have raised their voices in support of reform: from Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg to old economy CEOs like Doug Oberhelman of Caterpillar. Far from avoiding the debate, many companies are eager to associate their brands with the issue: national companies like Motorola, Cargill, Procter & Gamble and AT&T, but also local mom and pop businesses, like the pizzeria owners in Union County, New Jersey, who held a press conference this summer urging their congressman to make immigration a priority. The Bibles, Badges and Business coalition cosponsoring this week's fly-in worked with business owners and other advocates to organize more than 40 town halls beyond the beltway in August. Employers affiliated with ImmigrationWorks published opinion pieces reaching 1.9 million newspaper readers. And in recent weeks,

several influential business donors threatened to cut their political giving to lawmakers who vote the wrong way on immigration.

Taken together, it's a sea change – an all but unnoticed revolution. And it is already bearing fruit in Washington. The national debate is much more focused this time around on the economic benefits of immigration. The bill passed by the Senate in June significantly eases and expands labor migration with more employment-based green cards, more temporary visas for skilled workers and a new temporary visa program for less-skilled workers. And if anything, the Republican House is likely to go further, focusing on reforming the system so it works for the economy.

This week's fly-in is the next step – and it won't be the last. American employers have taken sides.

ImmigrationWorks USA president Tamar Jacoby can be reached for comment at 917 912-2821.

ImmigrationWorks USA is a national federation of employers working to advance better immigration law. Our network links major corporations, trade associations and state-based coalitions of small to medium-sized business owners concerned that the broken immigration system is holding back the nation's economic growth. Their shared aim: legislation that brings America's annual legal intake of foreign workers more realistically into line with the country's labor needs.