

# IMMIGRATION ESSENTIALS

## WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED IN A BILL

*AMERICA NEEDS FOREIGN WORKERS EVEN NOW*

### **SOME INDUSTRIES CAN'T FIND ENOUGH WORKERS EVEN IN A RECESSION**

- Though some industries are contracting in the downturn, agriculture, food processing and home health care still report few U.S. workers applying.
- Seasonal workers in particular remain in short supply.
  - A Washington lawmaker says many farms in his state are operating with 75 percent of the workforce they need, and growers will leave five percent of their crops on the ground.
- Even in a downturn, skilled U.S. workers may not take low-paying unskilled jobs.
  - In Morristown, Tenn., where the unemployment rate is 11.2 percent, U.S.-born workers told *The New York Times* they would take minimum-wage or low-paying manufacturing jobs only as a last resort, and even after six months out of work, they had not done so.
- The downturn doesn't change long-term educational trends: foreigners still account for two-thirds of the students in computer science and engineering programs at U.S. universities. The U.S. workforce alone cannot sustain a globally competitive knowledge economy.

### **THE DOWNTURN HASN'T REVERSED BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS**

- Soon there won't be enough native-born workers to replace retirees.
  - By 2012, more than 75 million baby boomers will retire. By 2020, U.S. fertility rates will drop below replacement levels. Without more workers, it will be hard to fill existing jobs – and all but impossible to grow the economy.
- Native-born workers are more educated today and less likely to do manual labor.
  - Today, fewer than 10 percent of American men drop out of high school to look for unskilled work – compared to 50 percent in 1960.
  - In 2007, foreigners accounted for nearly half of all workers with less than a high school education. The U.S. needs these workers to fill seasonal and unskilled jobs.

## **LABOR SHORTAGES COULD CHOKE THE RECOVERY**

- Neglecting immigration reform or shrinking temporary worker programs now will lead to labor shortages when the economy starts to improve.
  - U.S. employers can raise wages only so much – any higher and their businesses are no longer globally competitive. If they can't make a go of it in the U.S., many move to other countries.
  - Growers who can't find workers in the U.S. often move south across the border. U.S. direct investment in Mexican agriculture has increased sevenfold since 2000, and U.S. companies now farm more than 45,000 acres in Mexico, employing 11,000 workers.
- Other countries around the world are working hard to attract high-skilled immigrants – talent the U.S. will need when the economy starts to grow again.

## ***EMPLOYERS SUPPORT IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT***

### **FIX IT NOW – CONGRESS MUST RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW**

- U.S. employers want to be on the right side of the law. It is our obligation as citizens and it makes good business sense.
- But employers need the government's help. We need an accurate, reliable electronic system to verify that employees are who they say they are and are authorized to work.

### **E-VERIFY HAS THE MAKINGS OF AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM, BUT IT NEEDS WORK**

- Congress must appropriate funding to improve Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security databases.
- Before mandating E-Verify for all employers, the government must improve and streamline secondary screening procedures.
- Any new verification system must combat identity theft – either with a tamperproof work authorization card or some other means.

### **ENFORCE TOUGHER SANCTIONS AGAINST EGREGIOUS EMPLOYERS**

- Law-abiding business owners support more aggressive sanctions against businesses that deliberately flout the law and those that continue to use unauthorized workers once more realistic immigration quotas are in place.

### **THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IS A WORKABLE LEGAL IMMIGRATION SYSTEM**

- Enforcement alone has not and will not work to control immigration.

- Employers need better, more realistic immigration law combined with effective enforcement.
  - We must create a way for the foreign workers we need to keep U.S. businesses open and growing to enter the country legally.

## *WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED IN A REFORM BILL*

### **ALL VERSIONS OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM ARE NOT EQUAL**

- In 2006 and 2007, reform advocates agreed that a bill should have three pillars.
  - Effective enforcement on the border and in the workplace.
  - A practical answer for the 12 million unauthorized immigrants already in the country.
  - More visas for foreign workers arriving in the future – visas for enough legal workers to keep U.S. businesses open and growing.
- The AFL-CIO, now an important player in the reform coalition, wants a bill with few additional visas for workers. Instead, it proposes that we create a commission to set immigration quotas.
- The likely result: legislation that provides virtually no new visas for future workers.

### **WHY A BILL WITHOUT ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT-BASED VISAS WILL NOT WORK FOR EMPLOYERS OR THE ECONOMY**

- It's extremely difficult to enforce unrealistic quotas. Think about other unrealistic limits – Prohibition, or a 500-calorie-a-day diet – and how hard it is to make them stick.
- We've made this mistake before. The last major attempt to overhaul the immigration system, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, failed for this very reason. Because without an adequate pipeline for future workers, the U.S. could not make immigration enforcement stick. Now, nearly 25 years later, we are grappling with the inevitable result: 12 million unauthorized immigrants.

### **WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO ASK ABOUT A PROPOSED COMMISSION TO SET IMMIGRATION QUOTAS**

- Is this commission likely to provide an adequate supply of the workers we need for economic recovery and will need in the future to keep the economy growing?
- Would this commission make our immigration system more responsive to the market, or less?