

Immigration

Temporary Work Visas Will Help Alleviate Workforce Shortages and Curb Illegal Immigration

Action Needed:

HOUSE: Cosponsor the Workforce for an Expanding Economy Act ([H.R. 1740](#))

SENATE: Introduce a Companion Bill in the Senate.

The Workforce for an Expanding Economy Act would create a new market-driven, temporary immigration visa program for less skilled, year-round, non-agriculture occupations.

Background:

- The U.S. immigration system is broken. Current legal immigration programs exist for seasonal workers (H-2B), seasonal agriculture work (H-2A) and highly-skilled workers (H-1B), but there is no legal option for lesser-skilled immigrants to meet current or projected future workforce needs in the construction industry. Any legislative attempts to reform the nation's immigration laws must provide a legal option for these workers to help meet projected future workforce needs and help secure the border by disincentivizing illegal immigration.

AGC Message:

- **Visa Lengths must be Long Enough to Meet Construction Workforce Realities.** Any new visas should be valid long enough to ensure that the employer's training investment is not lost and employer needs are met. A temporary visa for three years – that can be renewed if market conditions warrant – will ensure training investments are worthwhile, while ensuring job security for U.S. citizens.
- **Visa Program Should Be Market-Based.** A cap of visas in times of high economic demand that fluctuates down during slower economic growth is appropriate. In areas where the unemployment rate exceeds 5 percent, the visas should not be eligible.
- **Visa Holders Should Enjoy the Same Labor and Employment Law Protections as Other Employees.** The wage structure requirements should preserve competitive wages for U.S. workers and ensure that legal temporary workers do not undermine the market. Employers would have to utilize the E-Verify system to be eligible to participate. Additionally, visa holders would not have an adverse impact on unions or union employers because any new union workers would be required to join the union while they are working for a union employer. Employers would contribute on their behalf to various benefit funds.
- **New Visa Program is a Component of Successful Immigration Reform.** Other necessary reforms include securing the border, providing an earned path toward legal, permanent status for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and temporary protected status (TPS) recipients, expand the H-2B program to meet the growing workforce shortage among seasonal positions and an opportunity for earned legal status for otherwise law-abiding undocumented workers.