

December 9, 2005

Dear Legislators:

America's failure to seriously address its current immigration policy has fostered a national crisis. Traditionally, America's strength derives from its ability to absorb and assimilate millions of people from hundreds of diverse cultures from around the world. Throughout our history immigrants have brought their languages and customs to these shores and reshaped this country as it has reshaped them.

As leaders of Northern Virginia's business community, we urge you to take a bold and active leadership role in working toward the enactment of meaningful, effective and comprehensive immigration reform. America's immigration laws have not been subject to a comprehensive reexamination for decades. In order to modernize these laws and to establish an immigration policy that will serve as an engine for growth through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the U.S. Government must address a number of critical factors. Reasonable people differ as to method, and the factors set forth below do not represent the universe of alternatives. We do, however, believe the following items represent some starting points for debate.

1. The law must recognize that American businesses' sustained and growing demand for unskilled and semiskilled labor is both legitimate and desirable as an engine for economic growth. Comprehensive immigration reform could establish a guest worker program that meets the demands of U.S. employers by authorizing a substantial and meaningful annual allotment of temporary worker visas.
2. America must step up its efforts to foster freedom, opportunity, and economic prosperity in the nations from which immigrants are drawn. This must be accomplished through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, trade and financial incentives, and the efforts of individual citizens and businesses to strengthen the ties among our countries and our societies.
3. Comprehensive immigration reform enhances our national security by strengthening border security, immigration screening, and enforcement of our laws.
4. Immigration processing must be improved in order to handle the backlog of applications more efficiently. Technological improvements and increased manpower to address the immigrant applications as well as to track immigrants once they arrive are greatly needed.

We ask that you consider these options to guide your deliberation on immigration reform legislation pending in Congress this term, and we look forward to working with you on this critical and historic task.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia D. Williams, president GraceFul Care  
Chairman, Herndon Dulles Chamber of Commerce  
*Recipient of the Community Trustee Award for 2005 from Leadership Fairfax, Inc.*  
[www.HerndonDullesChamber.org](http://www.HerndonDullesChamber.org) (571-323-5301 for Chamber President/CEO Eileen Curtis)

## **IMMIGRATION BACKGROUND BRIEFING**

Below please find the full position recently drafted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on this difficult and emotional issue. Why do we care about the national position? Because, with the exception of manufacturing, the nation's issues are our region's issues. I offer a brief summary of the main points for your consideration but ask that you take the time to read the full transcript for having the fullest understanding of this issue.

### **SUMMARY OF U.S. CHAMBER POSITION**

Immigration reform is needed from both a national security perspective as well as an economic perspective. Immigrants have always been a key to the success of our economy. Immigrants are one solution to workforce shortages that will inevitably exist in different sectors of our diverse economy.

#### **Immigration Reform Principles**

Members in the restaurant, hotel, health care, construction and many other predominantly service industries [are asking for] help in finding policy resolutions that will allow them to hire and retain the "essential workers" that keep our economy running. Our principles for immigration reform include:

- Strengthening national security by providing for the screening of foreign workers and creating a disincentive for illegal immigration.
- Strengthening the rule of law
- Creating an immigration system that functions efficiently for employers, workers and government agencies.
- Creating a program that allows hard working, tax paying undocumented workers to earn legal status.
- Ensuring that U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign workers.
- Ensuring that all workers, including legal temporary workers, enjoy the same labor law protections.

#### **Demographics and Essential Worker Shortages**

- By 2010, 77 million baby boomers will retire
- Close to 40% of all jobs require only short-term-on-the-job training
- Six of the top 10 growth occupations require only short-term-on-the-job training [including retail sales, nursing aides, janitors, waiters, food preparation workers]
- Impact of such workforce shortages translates into severe emergency room overcrowding..., discontinued programs, reduced service hours....
- Roofers will suffer a net deficit of 70,000 jobs
- Construction will need 185,000 new workers annually for the next 10 years
- A 10% increase of foreign-born workers reduces native wages by less than 1%.

## **The Problems/Issues**

We are better off knowing who these people are and putting them through a screening process and identifying those that are criminals or terrorist suspects. At the very least, this process will shrink “the haystack” and allow law enforcement to focus on real criminals and terrorists. [U.S. Chamber Position]

“I think it would be highly, highly difficult to [deport 8-10 million people, requiring] an enormous expenditure of effort and resources....I think we are talking about billions and billions and billions to do it.” [Michael Chertoff, Head of Homeland Security]

## **Solutions**

We need a long-term temporary visa for essential workers, similar to the H-1B (the high tech visa option). The current H-2B visa is temporary, seasonal, and very cumbersome. There is a 5-10 year wait for green cards now available for essential workers and only 5,000 of these are available each year.

We need a comprehensive immigrant reform that allows for a match between willing employers and willing employees that is fast and reliable, combined with visa limitations that fluctuate in connection with the needs of the market.

Business has two problems:

- Filling unfilled jobs, now and in the future
- Keeping current reliable workforce through some type of earned adjustment for undocumented workers

Legislation must address both these issues with new laws that are simple, easy to understand, and responsive to their needs.

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