

Illinois Chamber of Commerce Policy Position

Immigration Reform

There is no question that the U.S. immigration system is broken. Our current system is not serving the interests of our economy, businesses, or our society. Changes to our immigration policy must be developed to secure our borders, respond to the labor needs of the economy, provide a simple, reliable employee verification system and address the issues of the 11 million undocumented immigrants already living and working in the U.S.

The Illinois Chamber of Commerce recognizes that a comprehensive approach is needed to fix our immigration system. We need an immigration system with laws that are easy to enforce, make sense, and work. The Chamber supports legislative action that:

- Promotes our national security interests by continuing to focus on securing our borders while pursuing other immigration reform initiatives. Substantial progress must be made in securing the border prior to initiating pathways to legal status for undocumented immigrants. This is important both for national security and to ensure new waves of undocumented workers do not enter the country specifically to access the pathways.
- Addresses both our current and future economic needs for both high skilled and lower skilled workers through the creation of work visas programs. These work visa programs must be tied to market demands beyond those for high skilled, seasonal, and agricultural labor, and include other areas where employers face demonstrated labor shortages. Such programs would also increase national security and reduce illegal immigration by creating a functional, controlled system meeting workforce needs—a need not met by prior immigration legislation.
- Creates a workable, reliable national employee verification system. The federal E-Verify program has been improved dramatically. We are ready to move forward with it nationally, provided there is strong preemption language for state and local laws, no obligation to re-verify the entire current workforce for private employers, and a safe harbor for good faith efforts by employers.
- Provides a path towards legal status for the 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States today with the understanding that they will meet strict conditions, such as paying civil penalties and back taxes and learning English. All applications currently filed to immigrate legally must be processed first before the applications of undocumented immigrants.

Taken together, these proposals can help fix our broken immigration system and return business owners to doing what they do best: creating jobs.