

## Legislative Objectives



# Immigration Reform

## Background

Current and projected demographic and sociological changes to the United States workforce underscore an urgent need for workers in all aspects of the national economy. The workforce available to perform manual labor is aging rapidly, and the shortage of highly skilled STEM talent and agricultural workers is well documented. Our immigration system is not meeting the needs of employers. The country is not producing enough highly skilled experts in fields that are essential to American competitiveness, stunting job creation and constraining innovation and continued economic growth.

Our current immigration laws fail to provide U.S. employers with the ability to recruit and retain the talented workers that they need. As a result, technology, agricultural, and manufacturing employers are being forced to consider moving facilities to Canada and other nations that have sufficient workers or an adequate guest worker program. At the same time, experts estimate there are as many as 12 million out of status workers in the country working hard in agriculture, construction, and the restaurant industry, to name a few. Without these workers, our crops would rot in the fields and our service industry would grind to a halt. The combination of a need for workers and an inadequate immigration system is limiting our economic growth and our global ability to compete with other countries with more attentive immigration policies.

While past presidential administrations have voiced support for various forms of immigration reform, Congress has repeatedly failed to act to reform our immigration system. In the meantime, employers continue to face random enforcement actions within a broken immigration system.

## Objectives

AWB supports legislation that will:

- Create a carefully monitored federal program to fill the growing gaps in America's workforce by ensuring the viability of a new temporary agriculture non-immigrant visa program and increasing the availability of non-immigrant visas and green cards for high skilled talent. Any new program should ensure flexibility to employers and portability to workers, based on labor market needs. Alongside these reforms, we encourage an opportunity for earned legal status for out-of-status workers already present in the United States.
- Modernize student visa programs to make our colleges and universities more attractive, so that we can recruit the best and brightest throughout the world to study in the U.S. and contribute to our future growth.
- Harmonize state-level laws regulating the terms and conditions of employment of workers under federal visa programs to provide clear, consistent, guidance on the rights and obligations of employers and workers.
- Reform employee verification and enforcement processes by establishing clear, consistent standards that promote a legal workforce while protecting employers from undue costs and unrealistic demands. Reforms should include improving the I-9 audit process using clear and transparent metrics.