



Immigration

Background: The Construction Research Service estimates that the construction industry will require an average of 185,000 new workers per year over the next decade to meet growing workforce demands. The construction industry faces a growing problem of a shortage of skilled labor; some of this insufficiency is being addressed by the immigrant workforce.

Estimates suggest that 11-12 million illegal immigrants reside in the United States. Many U.S. businesses, especially those in the agriculture and construction communities, are dependent upon these immigrants. To deport these immigrants would put in jeopardy the survival of many businesses.

Status: During the 109th Congress, House-passed legislation emphasized border security and increased enforcement. The Senate passed comprehensive legislation that included enforcement measures but also a temporary worker visa program and a plan for dealing with the nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants. PHCC had concerns with the House legislation that would have placed large fines and penalties on employers for paperwork violations. New emphasis would have been placed on employers to police illegal immigration. PHCC was vehemently opposed to provisions that would have held contractors (subcontractors) liable for subcontractors (sub-subcontractors) that employed illegal immigrants.

With Democrats in the leadership during the 110th Congress, it is unclear where immigration reform will be on the list of priorities. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) is likely to play the lead role in any immigration legislation. His approach is expected to be comprehensive in nature that will likely include a new visa structure and a process that will put hard working undocumented workers on a path to permanent legal residence.

PHCC--National Association Position: Illegal immigrants strain federal, state, and local resources. Clear and sensible immigration laws must be established which provide vigorous and efficient enforcement. National security will be strengthened by creating a disincentive for illegal immigration. Immigration policies have to be strengthened to ensure that U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign workers.

PHCC believes the anticipated influx of legal guest workers should not present an opportunity for employers to undercut market-based wages and benefits. Moreover, wages for legal guest workers should be determined by the most prevalent data available and comparable to wages for native employees performing the same or similar work.

PHCC supports a comprehensive approach to cure the nation's immigration crisis; one that strengthens our borders, our national security, and our economy. PHCC believes that Congress is obligated to create a program that would allow hard working, tax paying, undocumented workers to earn legal status. Undocumented immigrants that are not employed, not actively pursuing employment, engaging in illicit activity, or otherwise not positively contributing to society, must be deported. At present, PHCC members



must review and identify employees through the I-9 verification process; PHCC opposes additional legislation that would make employers become the de facto “immigration police.”

PHCC seeks support from Congress to:

- strengthen our national security through increased interior enforcement and border security; immigration laws should be clear, sensible, efficient and vigorously enforced; and
- reform the nation’s immigration system to allow for the establishment of a guest worker visa program and a pragmatic process that would permit hard working, tax paying, undocumented workers to earn legal status. Wages for legal guest workers should be determined by the most prevalent data available and comparable to wages for native employees performing the same or similar work.