

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

**OBJECTIVE:** As Congress considers comprehensive reform of the immigration system, it should include provisions that requires mandatory E-Verify for employers and a robust guest worker program to recruit legal foreign-born individuals when there is a shortage of domestic workers.

**E-VERIFY:** E-Verify is an Internet-based system that compares information from the [Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](#), to U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) records to confirm that an individual is authorized to work in the U.S. It has a nearly perfect accuracy rate and is currently required for federal contractors and in a handful of states.

The White House proposed mandatory nationwide use of the E-Verify program in its Fiscal Year 2019 Budget but has backed off that demand in recent months. There is a chance that E-Verify could become part of a larger immigration package if lawmakers are spurred to take up the issue again. Outside of the agriculture industry, there are few complaints about E-Verify beyond it being an administrative burden.

**GUEST WORKER PROGRAM:** As the housing industry grows and demand for workers increases, labor shortages are among the top impediments to continued growth in residential construction. The share of foreign-born workers in the U.S. construction labor force continues to rise and is now 24.4 percent. By comparison, foreign-born workers were 19.9 percent of the construction labor force in 2004.

Foreign-born workers comprise an even larger share of construction specialty trades. Foreign-born individuals comprise 30 percent of all workers in construction trades, and in some specialties, nearly half of workers are immigrants. For example, foreign-born workers comprise 49 percent of drywall installers, 46 percent of carpet, floor, and tile finishers, and 45 percent of roofers.

As Congress and the Administration look to address immigration policies, a comprehensive solution is needed that protects the nation's borders; includes a market-based visa program that fills labor gaps to ensure that the nation has a workforce that is sufficient to meet its residential construction needs; and provides a workable employment verification system.

**CURRENT STATUS:** The House and Senate both failed to pass comprehensive immigration bills earlier this year. Congress could be forced to revisit the issue if federal court's allow the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to end.

**NLBMDA POSITION:** NLBMDA supports a robust guest worker program to recruit legal foreign-born workers when there is a shortage of domestic workers, and the use of E-Verify to determine worker eligibility if there are appropriate protections for small businesses.

**REQUEST:** Support mandatory use of E-Verify and a guest worker program as part of immigration reform to help address the labor shortage in residential construction.

For more information, contact Ben Gann, vice president of legislative and political affairs, at [ben@dealer.org](mailto:ben@dealer.org) or 202.367.2346.