



## Press Release

For Immediate Release  
April 1, 2008

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# ARIZONA EMPLOYERS CALL ON STATE TO SUPPLY TEMPORARY WORKERS

Washington, DC - The Arizona business community and ImmigrationWorks USA came together today to make a statement: an op-ed piece in the Arizona Republic asking the state legislature to step in where the federal government has failed, providing Arizona with the workers it needs to stay afloat through the economic downturn ahead.

The op-ed's signatories are a Who's Who of Arizona business: the state Chamber of Commerce, the Phoenix and Tucson Chambers, the Arizona Farm Bureau, the Western Growers Association and half a dozen additional trade associations representing hotels, restaurants, contractors, landscapers and agricultural employers.

"What part of 'legal' don't you understand?" the piece asks. "If we as a state are going to become a laboratory for state-based immigration policy, we believe the experimentation should be positive as well as negative - not just cracking down on illegal immigrants but also ensuring that the state has the legal workforce it needs to prosper and grow."

"We wanted to change the conversation," explained Jason LeVecke, chairman of Arizona Employers for Immigration Reform, one of the signatories of the article. "We employers feel as strongly as anyone - Arizona needs to get control of its border and restore the rule of law. But we also need labor to grow our economy, and we don't think we as a state should have to make a choice between the two."

Joe Sigg, representative of the Arizona Farm Bureau, agreed: "Ultimately, it's up to the federal government to make immigration policy. But the federal government has failed to act, and we in Arizona can't wait - we need the workers now."

"How long can Congress go on ignoring cries like this from beyond the beltway?" asked ImmigrationWorks president Tamar Jacoby. "Passing this bill would be an important step for Arizona and an even more important turn in the national immigration debate."

For more about the op-ed piece or to speak to Jason LeVecke or Joe Sigg, please contact Tamar Jacoby at [tjacoby@immigrationworksusa.org](mailto:tjacoby@immigrationworksusa.org) or 973 744-6117.

[www.ImmigrationWorksUSA.org](http://www.ImmigrationWorksUSA.org)

# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

## Arizona needs a stable, legal workforce

Apr. 1, 2008 12:00 AM

We come from all walks of life, united by our concern that Washington's failure to act on immigration has left Arizona in an impossible predicament.

If we as a state are going to become a laboratory for state-based immigration policy, we believe the experimentation should be positive as well as negative: not just cracking down on illegal immigrants but ensuring that the state has the legal workforce it needs to prosper and grow.

What part of "legal" don't you understand?

Arizona needs a stable, reliable, legal supply of workers, foreign- as well as native-born. If the feds can't deliver that legal workforce, the state must take matters into its own hands. It must push for a homegrown solution, no matter how partial or imperfect. And we signatories stand united in our support for the legislation pending in the state House of Representatives that would create an Arizona temporary-worker program.

Far too many Arizonans think we face a choice: immigration or the rule of law. We signatories understand - we share - Arizonans' determination to regain control of the border. But that need not - cannot - mean that we as a state must choke our economy. We can remain open for business and restore the rule of law, too. We can and we must.

The economic facts are stark. It's no accident that Arizona and Greater Phoenix have been among the fastest-growing economies in the nation for nearly two decades. A rapidly growing immigrant population fueled the runaway construction boom that drove the state's broad-based economic expansion, an expansion that created jobs for Americans and immigrants alike.

Today, one in 10 Arizona workers is foreign-born. In 2004 alone, they added \$43.7 billion to the state economy. Even with the immigrant influx, unemployment in Arizona is close to the lowest in the land, still hovering about 4 percent. And even with a recession looming, the state faces severe labor shortages in vital sectors - agriculture, hospitality, home health care - that rely on unskilled labor.

Immigration enforcement is essential for our security, but unless it is combined with additional visas, employers will not have access to the stable, reliable supply of labor we need. Add recessionary pressures, and Arizona could be facing a perfect storm, a storm that could severely hobble our recovery from a slowdown. Just as it's hard to grow a business without new workers, it's all but impossible to grow an economy. Yet we are likely to find ourselves with fewer and fewer workers in the years ahead.

How practical is an Arizona-only temporary-worker program, and would it solve the problem we face? Ultimately, the solution must come from Washington. It must apply to all 50 states. And along with a pipeline for legal workers, it must include answers for the illegal immigrants already here. But Arizona doesn't have the luxury of waiting for Washington to get its act together. Our economy is in danger now, and if we're going to experiment with driving illegal immigrants out, we also need to experiment with bringing legal workers in.

Congress doesn't like to be upstaged, and it may not grant the state the waiver it would need to implement an Arizona-only temporary-worker program. But the only way to find out is to call Washington's bluff.

Skeptics who say the prospect is far-fetched forget a recent history-making parallel: Wisconsin's experiments in the late 1980s and early '90s with welfare reform. Wisconsin, too, saw itself as a laboratory.

Wisconsin, too, sought a federal waiver. Wisconsin, too, bucked cynics and naysayers, tackling a problem others said could not be solved. But before the state's pilot project was even a few years old, the federal government was moving to imitate and build on it with broad, bipartisan, landmark legislation.

Arizona now, Washington before the decade is out? We won't know unless we try.

SIGNED BY:

*Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry*

*Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce*

*Tucson Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce*

*Arizona Farm Bureau*

*Arizona Employers for Immigration Reform*

*Arizona Restaurant & Hospitality Association*

*Arizona Contractors Association*

*Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association*

*Western Growers Association Arizona Nursery Association*

*Arizona Cattle Feeders Association*

*Arizona Landscape Contractors' Association*

*ImmigrationWorks USA*