

## Congress prepares to reauthorize E-Verify

*Lawmakers Seek House Vote On E-Verify Reauthorization*

by [Chris Strohm](#)

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A bipartisan group of House lawmakers hopes to buy Congress more time to tackle the charged debate over how best to verify the immigration status of workers in the United States. House Judiciary Chairman John Conyers and Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., plan to bring a bill to the House floor before the August recess to extend the Homeland Security Department's E-Verify program through 2018. The program, also known as the Basic Pilot/Employment Eligibility Verification Program, expires Nov. 1 unless Congress reauthorizes it. The bill, which was introduced by Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., would not make any changes to the program. "Really the question is, do we let the current program expire?" Lofgren said Monday. "We want to keep the status quo while we continue to actively examine the various alternatives."

E-Verify is now a voluntary program employers can use to check the immigration status of their workers. Nearly 70,000 employers are enrolled in it. But debate has raged in Congress for months between some lawmakers who want to make the program mandatory and others who want to replace it with a different mandatory system. Other lawmakers say a mandatory employment verification program needs to be coupled with comprehensive immigration reform legislation that creates a temporary guest worker program. "They all, I think, need further examination and work and I don't think we're going to accomplish that in [the] weeks" left before Congress adjourns, Lofgren said.

Julie Kirchner, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, said the bill is "a bare minimum in terms of what needs to be done in terms of true immigration reform." She said the bill dodges addressing the larger issue of making E-Verify mandatory, which FAIR supports. But she noted states like Arizona have required employers to use E-Verify, which makes it more important for Congress to reauthorize it. "It is very, very important that the program is still there for businesses that want to use it while Congress debates the larger issue," she said. Kirchner added that FAIR will be watching to see if lawmakers try to attach other provisions to the bill, such as those creating a guest worker program, which her organization would oppose.

Lofgren and Conyers plan to bring the bill to the House floor under suspension of the rules, which means members would not be allowed to amend it. Calvert tried to attach his bill as an amendment to the FY09 Homeland Security spending bill when it was marked up last month by the House Appropriations Committee. But House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman David Price, D-N.C., opposed the amendment, saying he had received a letter from Lofgren and Conyers about their intent to bring

Calvert's bill to the House floor: "It is our intention to move this bill or another bill that would extend the Basic Pilot program on the suspension calendar before the August congressional recess so that our continuing exploration of possible improvements to the current system can continue without the specter of the complete elimination of the current program," Lofgren and Conyers wrote. House Judiciary ranking member Lamar Smith supports an extension of E-Verify and does not object to the bill going to the House floor, his spokeswoman said.