



The business voice on immigration

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY CHECKLIST FOR EMPLOYERS

After more than a decade of debate, we are entering what could be the final phase of the battle for comprehensive immigration reform. But it won't happen without business owners. Here are some ways you can engage.

ENGAGE YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Lawmakers care what their constituents think. They try to be responsive. But they can't be expected to know your concerns unless you communicate them – clearly and often.

Visit a member of Congress' local office. Make your voice heard – meet with lawmakers or their staff in their district offices. The most effective thing you can do is tell your story. Legislators can read what the experts think, they can look up the facts. What no one else can do as well as you: make it real. Why does immigration reform matter to you, your workers and the economy where you do business?

Write to a member of Congress. Your representatives need to hear from you about how to vote on immigration legislation. It's best to communicate by fax or email. The more timely and specific your letter, the more effective it will be. Don't hesitate to write often. Our opponents do! Visit www.immigrationworksusaaction.org to find your representatives' contact information.

Invite a member of Congress to visit your business. One of the most effective ways to get your message across: inviting a member of Congress to tour your business. No one can explain the economic benefits of immigration better than an employer who counts on an immigrant labor force. Let your representative see for him or herself how foreign workers help keep your company afloat, creating and sustaining jobs for U.S. workers.

Speak out at a town hall meeting. Anti-immigrant advocates often dominate the conversation at town hall meetings. But you can change that – by making your voice heard. Lawmakers will notice – a personal experience at a town hall makes more of an impression than a stack of opinion polls. As in a face-to-face meeting, the most effective thing you can do is tell your story – a short, vivid explanation of why immigration matters to you. Give your representative a reason to vote in favor of immigration reform.

Invite a member of Congress to address your local trade group or Rotary Club.

What better way to get your representative engaged and thinking about the immigration issues that matter to you? It's also a great way to start or strengthen a relationship. Lawmakers welcome this kind of opportunity – make sure your organization is on their list of stops.

MAKE THE CASE IN THE MEDIA

Speaking out in the media is as important as communicating directly with your representatives. Lawmakers who read the case for reform in the local newspaper or hear it on the radio are going to be much more comfortable voting in favor of it. Making the case in the media also emboldens other employers to speak out.

Write an op-ed piece. Start a conversation about immigration in your local newspaper by submitting an op-ed piece. Your local paper would much rather publish the opinion of a reader than an article by a Washington insider.

Write a letter to the editor. If your local paper has run a story about immigration or editorialized about it, respond with a letter to the editor. Letters should be short and to the point. They should also be timely – send them the day you see the story in the paper or the day after.

Call a talk radio show. Talk radio all but single-handedly killed immigration reform in 2006 and 2007. Restrictionist activists called in *en masse*; those in favor of reform rarely picked up the phone. Don't let that happen again. Call your local talk radio show and make your views known – explain why immigration is important to your business and the U.S. economy.

POLITICS IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

Politics is about arguments – about persuading elected officials. But it's also about numbers: the raw number of supporters willing to stand up and support a given position.

There are many ways to make a difference. These are just a few of the options. For additional information and ideas, visit www.immigrationworksusa.org.

Join our community. Be part of our network. Take advantage of the tools we offer.

Together, we are more than the sum of our parts. We can win the battle for immigration reform – but you must act now!

ImmigrationWorks USA is a national federation of employers working to advance better immigration law. The network links major corporations, national trade associations and 25 state-based coalitions of small to medium-sized business owners concerned that the broken immigration system is holding back the nation's economic growth. Their shared aim: legislation that brings America's annual legal intake of foreign workers more realistically into line with the country's labor needs.