



May 14, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senator
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senator
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), a national association of 72 chapters representing nearly 22,000 members from more than 19,000 construction and industry-related firms, I am writing in regard to the Senate Judiciary mark-up of Title IV of the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744).

ABC has supported comprehensive immigration reform for many years and we are encouraged that the Senate bill includes well-crafted approaches to border security, legalization and an innovative solution to future workforce needs. We are pleased this bill includes a W visa guest worker program for construction and other industries. In order to make sure these reforms are able to respond to workforce needs of our economy in times of both high and low unemployment, we recommend the Committee approve the changes to Title IV contained in amendment #9, which would substantially improve the W visa program.

For the construction industry, a guest worker program designed to address future labor shortages is essential to the success of any viable reform to our immigration system. Any new program must create a system that is both large enough to meet future demand and streamlined and nimble enough to meet the changing needs of the industry's workforce

The current plan for construction in S. 744, however, is simply too small to address the workforce needs of our industry. Specifically, we are concerned with the limitations the bill imposes on construction industry access to visas in the W visa program. We believe that all industries included in the program should have equal access to visas. Putting inflexible restrictions on our industry's use of the W visa program invites labor shortages that will stifle

economic growth. The construction industry will need about 1.8 million more workers by 2020. This is based on BLS data that says there were 5.6 million construction workers employed at the end of 2012; and a BLS projection that construction industry employment will grow to about 7.4 million by 2020. According to these numbers, the industry would need roughly 225,000 more workers per year through the end of the decade.

For these reasons, we support amendment #9 introduced by Senators Cornyn (R-TX) and Lee (R-UT) that addresses the labor needs of the construction industry. We believe that this amendment speaks to our concerns stated above and is vital to the success of this program. We appreciate the time and thought you have spent creating this program and look forward to working with you on its improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Burr", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Geoffrey Burr
Vice President, Federal Affairs