



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 22, 2013

Media Contact:  
Gary M. Mabrey, III  
423-461-8010

The immigration reform bill recently passed by the U.S. Senate and now being considered by the U.S. House of Representatives is good for business, and with the addition of the amendment Sen. **Corker** co-authored, it is our best chance to repair the broken immigration system. Since its founding, immigrants have populated our nation, and the newest arrivals often have done work no one else wanted to do, but today, our immigration system allows millions of people to live and work here without lawful status. Under current policies, people who simply want to provide for themselves and their families are left in an underground economy where they benefit from the American mainstream without paying taxes. In addition, American businesses are often forced to serve as the front line for enforcing immigration policy without clarity about how to proceed. Maintaining the status quo means turning a blind eye to a problem that piecemeal legislation has been unable to resolve for many years. In contrast, the Senate bill simultaneously closes enforcement gaps while providing both carrots and sticks to bring undocumented immigrants into the regular economy.

Currently, people who overstay their visa account for 40 percent of those in the U.S. unlawfully enjoying “de facto amnesty.” There is no systematic process for removing them. The proposed Senate bill would fully implement an entry/exit system, and the Hoenen-**Corker** amendment takes it a step further by mandating that removal proceedings begin for at least 90 percent of visa overstays. The bill also ties the number of available work visas not to country of origin but rather to America’s market demand for different skill sets and categories of work. Further, companies will be able to use technology to clarify the hiring process. Using E-Verify, companies will have a clear-cut system for checking each applicant’s legal eligibility to work. The proposed legislation also calls on companies to make substantial efforts to find qualified Americans for available jobs, and employers would be required to give citizens the preference in hiring.

Only after exhausting these possibilities will employers be allowed to hire eligible immigrants, who must be paid the same market-rate wages an American would receive. This negates the worsening of average wages currently created by illegally employed workers willing or forced to work cheap. At the same time, the Senate bill creates accountability for immigrants. They will not be able to obtain work without proper documentation, and when they do, they will have to pay taxes. The minimum 13-year process to become eligible for citizenship ensures that only the most dedicated and productive immigrants will be able to achieve their dream of one day becoming Americans. Better still, the Congressional Budget Office projects that the \$46 billion cost of the bill will be more than offset by additional visa fees and tax revenues from eligible immigrant workers. In fact, the Budget Office estimates the bill will reduce the deficit by \$158 billion during the first 10 years and by \$685 billion during the second decade.

The true test of legislation is its effectiveness. The United States has been limping along with an outdated, overly-bureaucratic, and by all accounts ineffective immigration system for decades. The Senate bill levels the playing field for American workers, gives businesses more certainty about who to hire and how to address worker shortages, and creates accountability for undocumented immigrants who will have to reach a very high bar to achieve citizenship. Our Chamber Board and I applaud Sen. **Corker** for working to broker this much-needed immigration reform bill and Sen. Alexander, who also voted in support of the measure. The Board and I look forward to the ongoing dialogue that should lead to a consensus building by the House and Senate, followed by other agreements that will be good for business and free enterprise.

