



June 25, 2013  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

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 vote on the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744). For years, ABC has advocated for comprehensive immigration reform that secures our nation's borders, deals with the 11 million undocumented workers currently in our country and provides a legal immigration system that can respond to economic demand. Unfortunately, ABC cannot support S. 744 because this legislation fails to provide for a workable legal immigration system for our industry.

A workable guest worker program is crucial to the success of comprehensive immigration reform. The key fatal flaw of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act was its failure to provide a legal immigration program that could respond to labor market demand in times of both high and low unemployment. While S. 744 creates a new temporary worker program, its overall visa caps are too low and it arbitrarily singles out the construction industry for an additional set of unrealistic and unworkable limitations. While this construction cap did placate a powerful special interest, it makes the program unworkable for an industry which currently employs over 6 million people nationally and accounts for 5 percent of our nation's economy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the construction industry is expected to need about 1.8 million new workers by 2020. With an aging workforce, in order for the industry to continue to meet U.S. construction demand, there must be a way for the industry to legally supplement its workforce when there are not a sufficient number of willing or able American workers. It is also important to note that an effective low skilled guest worker program is not only an economic issue, but also plays an important role in securing our border. When legal immigration vehicles are able to meet labor force demands, a truly secure border becomes a more realistic and achievable goal.

ABC will continue to strongly advocate for comprehensive immigration reform solutions as this debate continues. We encourage Senators to consider the impact that the concerns outlined above would have on our economy, our industry and our borders as the chamber moves toward final consideration of this measure.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Burr  
Vice President, Federal Affairs