



# TOWN HALL TOOL KIT

## Spotlight: Immigration Reform





## Talking Points: Immigration Reform

### Specific “Asks” for Immigration Reform

- ▶ Our immigration system must be reformed now so employers have access to a legal workforce when no Americans are available for unfilled jobs.
- ▶ It is difficult to find workers for many hotel jobs now. The lodging industry is projected to create 141,000 new jobs by 2020 – access to workers is a critical issue.
- ▶ The status quo undermines our national security and our economy.
- ▶ This situation cannot simply resolve itself. Solving our immigration crisis now requires Congress to act now.
- ▶ A new employment verification system is needed that is accurate, efficient, and will protect employers from liability for mistakes made by that system.

### Summary

Immigrants are not only critical to the strength of the lodging industry, but also to the growth of the American economy. The lodging industry supports a broad-based approach to immigration reform that ensures we can:

- ▶ Secure our borders but allow the U.S. to remain a hospitable nation to those that travel here for business and leisure.
- ▶ Establish an earned legalization process to screen and identify current undocumented workers.

- ▶ Create an adequate system that provides access to workers to meet economic growth.
- ▶ Provide a worker verification system that is accurate and efficient with a safe harbor for employers.
- ▶ Retain and protect the H-2B seasonal worker program.
- ▶ Do not create liabilities for unknowing employers due to the actions of foreign recruiters.

### Background

- ▶ The lodging industry is a leading job creator in our economy, with projections of 141,000 jobs created by 2020. Because lodging creates so many jobs, we have difficulty finding enough people to fill them – a problem becoming more acute as the economy continues to recover.
- ▶ Our current immigration system is not working. There are approximately 11 million undocumented workers throughout the United States, and employers are unsure whether workers they screen are indeed permitted to work in the U.S. due to the proliferation of fraudulent identification.
- ▶ There is no adequate access to authorized workers when jobs go unfilled. The government does not know who is in this country or where they are located.



## Tips for Attending a Town Hall Meeting

Participating in a town hall meeting with your congressman or senator is an effective way to share your expertise and communicate the views and needs of hoteliers to policymakers. It is important to remember that members of Congress want to hear from you and other constituents, as often it is their only way of learning about the issues of concern to you.

To help you prepare for your visit to one of these meetings, here are a few helpful tips to keep in mind.

**Arrive Early.** Try to arrive at least 10-15 minutes ahead of the scheduled start time to sign in (if requested), introduce yourself and speak to the member of Congress' staff beforehand, and locate a seat near any microphone stand provided for audience questions.

**Speak Early.** Try to speak as early in the meeting as you are able, as press is more likely to attend and cover the first part of the event.

**Stay Brief.** Limit your statement to no more than three clear and concise points. Provide persuasive facts to help participants understand and remember your points.

**Tell a Personal Story.** Think in advance of how a particular policy might affect you, your family, your business, or your community. Whether the member of Congress agrees with your position or not, they want to hear your story.

**Use Numbers If You Have Them.** Nearly every person who speaks before a member of Congress represents more constituents, either by a class or as a spokesperson. Use these

numbers: "I have 50 employees;" "There are 10 other hotels in my area;" "There are over 80 hospitality businesses in my community that think just like me." Make it easy for the congressman or senator to determine how big the group is that you represent.

**Leave Behinds.** This tool kit provides summaries of AH&LA positions on key issues, which can be left after the meeting with the congressman's/senator's staff. Additionally, be sure to provide written copies of any statement you provide (either AH&LA's or your own) to policymakers, members of their staffs, and the press.

**Politely Follow Up.** To provide further emphasis on the points you made during the meeting, follow up within 7-10 days with a phone call to reiterate your comments. There is often great value in hosting a member of Congress on a back-of-house visit to your property, enabling them to visit with your team and learn more about how issues being debated in Washington impact your bottom line.

**Inform AH&LA.** Once the meeting concludes, follow up with a member of the AH&LA staff and provide a summary of what took place. Focus in particular on what opportunities you had to speak and provide your views, how the congressman/senator responded, and any other interaction that took place. Also provide any other information you think will be helpful for AH&LA staff as they follow up with contacts on Capitol Hill. You can send your feedback and summary to [gov.affairs@ahla.com](mailto:gov.affairs@ahla.com).



## Lodging Industry Statistics

- ▶ The tourism industry pays \$124 billion in federal, state, and local taxes.
- ▶ Tourism directly supports more than 7.5 million travel and tourism jobs – for every 35 visitors to the U.S., one American job is created.
- ▶ Travel/tourism is one of the top 10 largest industries in 48 states plus the District of Columbia.
- ▶ International visitors accounted for 21% of all lodging sales (Bureau of Economic Analysis).
- ▶ Resident and international travelers in the United States spend an average of \$2.2 billion a day, \$92.8 million an hour, \$1.5 million a minute, and \$25,700 a second.
- ▶ Tourism generates \$813 billion in sales (excluding international passenger fares on U.S. airlines).
- ▶ Average length of stay for overseas hotel visitors was 8.8 nights; the average party size was 1.7 travelers.

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### Top 10 countries in terms of U.S. arrivals for 2011

(accounting for 80% of U.S. visitors):

- ▶ Canada - **21.3** million
- ▶ Mexico - **13.5** million
- ▶ United Kingdom - **3.8** million
- ▶ Japan - **3.2** million
- ▶ Germany - **1.8** million
- ▶ Brazil – **1.5** million
- ▶ France - **1.5** million
- ▶ South Korea - **1.1** million
- ▶ People's Republic of China - **1.1** million
- ▶ Australia – **1.0** million

### 2011 At-a-Glance Statistical Figures\*

- ▶ **51,214** properties (of 15 or more rooms)
- ▶ **4,874,837** guest rooms
- ▶ **\$137.5** billion in sales
- ▶ **\$21.6** billion in pretax income
- ▶ **60%** average occupancy rate

\* 2011 data is most recent available.



## The Lodging Industry Supports Immigration Reform

The lodging industry appreciates the desire of Congress to find a solution for immigration reform and looks forward to participating in that discussion.

The **American Hotel & Lodging Association** supports a broad-based solution to immigration that:

- Secures our borders but allow the U.S. to remain a hospitable nation to those that travel here for business and leisure.
- Establishes an earned legalization process to screen and identify current undocumented workers.
- Creates an adequate system that provides access to workers to meet economic growth.
- Provides a worker verification system that is accurate and efficient with a safe harbor for employers.
- Retains and protects the H-2B seasonal worker program
- Does not create liabilities for unknowing employers due to the actions of foreign recruiters

People are the foundation of the lodging industry. Our employees provide the hospitality and personal service that is the lifeblood of every hotel.

The lodging industry is a leading job creator in our economy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that our industry will create more than 141,000 new jobs by 2020. Because lodging creates so many jobs, we have difficulty finding enough people to fill them. This problem will become more acute as the economy recovers, despite the good wages and growth opportunity the industry provides.

Our current immigration system is not working. There are approximately 11 million undocumented workers throughout the United States. Employers are unsure whether workers they screen are indeed permitted to work in the U.S. due to the proliferation of fraudulent identification. There is no adequate access to authorized workers when jobs go unfilled. And finally, the government does not know who is in this country or where they are located.

We understand that immigrants are not only critical to the strength of the lodging industry, but also to the growth of the American economy. America needs a broad-based solution to our immigration system that provides security to our nation, our employers, American workers, and those immigrants who contribute to a better America while they work to create a better life for themselves.

Immigration reform must retain the H-2B seasonal worker program. In addition, the successful returning worker cap exemption needs to be renewed and a reasonable wage methodology needs to be established in statute to prevent the uncertainty and harm that has been caused by arbitrary rules.

The lodging industry supports a broad-based approach that ensures we can control our borders while remaining a hospitable nation to those that travel here for business and leisure, establishes an earned legalization process through which currently undocumented workers can be screened and identified, creates an adequate system that provides access to workers to meet economic growth, and provides a worker verification system that is accurate and efficient.

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## Sample Letter to Congress: Immigration Reform

**Note:** To personalize and deliver this letter to your congressman, visit [www.ahla.com/hotelloobby](http://www.ahla.com/hotelloobby).

Dear Representative:

I am writing to urge you to support legislation to reform our immigration system.

It is clear that legislation must be passed to increase national security and control of our nation's borders, create an effective worker verification system, establish an efficient temporary worker program that allows employers to recruit immigrant workers when there is a shortage of domestic workers, and provide a mechanism for qualified, screened undocumented workers now in the country to earn legal status.

As a hotelier, I take great pride in providing the finest personal service for our guests. This requires that an adequate number of employees are on staff to provide that service. Without my valuable employees, I cannot provide that service, and without it, I cannot operate my hotel.

One of the greatest challenges I face is finding employees to fill critical positions needed to run my hotel. Despite offering competitive salaries and benefits and using numerous recruiting outlets, many positions are left unfilled each year because there simply not enough Americans applying for the jobs.

Our economy requires a program that will allow employers to bring needed workers into the United States when American workers cannot be found. We must also recognize the presence, need, and contributions of workers who are currently undocumented and provide those who qualify with legal status.

Our border must be secured as well. Along with additional resources dedicated to that security, the creation of an adequate guest worker program that screens individuals will allow us to focus our enforcement resources on identifying those who wish to do us harm and prevent their entry to the United States.

The creation of a fair, effective, and efficient employment verification system is also needed. However, that system must not hold employers who utilize it liable for errors made by the system.

The status quo and our lack of a rational immigration system undermines our national security and our economy. This situation cannot simply resolve itself. The opportunity to solve our immigration crisis now requires your leadership.

I urge you to support sensible reform of our nation's immigration laws that serves both the economic and national security needs of America.

Sincerely,



## Sample Op-Ed: Immigration Reform

As Congress struggles to address U.S. immigration policy, one simple, undeniable fact must remain front and center in the debate: maintaining the status quo is not an option.

Our current immigration system is not working. There are approximately 11 million undocumented workers throughout the United States. Employers are unsure whether workers they screen are indeed permitted to work in the U.S. due to the proliferation of fraudulent identification. There is no adequate access to authorized workers when jobs go unfilled. And finally, the government does not know who is in this country or where they are located.

Washington must recognize the critical role that foreign workers play in our economy on both a temporary and permanent basis. To be effective, reform will have to address both the existing undocumented workforce and the future need of workers in our economy. This will require establishing a working mechanism to bring needed foreign workers into the U.S. when American workers cannot be found. This also requires an immigration system that recognizes the presence, need, and contributions of workers currently in our economy that are undocumented under the current system and provides those who qualify with legal status.

In addition to protecting our economy, reform must protect our borders. By creating an adequate temporary worker program that screens individuals, our government can focus its limited resources on identifying those who wish to do us harm and prevent their entry to the country.

The Senate recently passed a bipartisan immigration reform bill that places a priority on securing our nation's borders while also ensuring that U.S. employers will be able to hire guest workers for jobs otherwise unfilled by American citizens. The package is not perfect by any means, but it is a vital first step in fixing an immigration system that is hopelessly broken.

Members of the House of Representatives must now act and approve their version of immigration reform. It may be difficult but it is their job and responsibility.

Immigrants are not only critical to the strength of the lodging industry, but also to the growth of the American economy. America needs a broad based solution to our immigration system that provides security to our borders, employers, American workers, and to those immigrants who contribute to a better America while they work to create a better life for themselves.

As long as there are jobs which Americans are not filling and no mechanisms for legally bringing in foreign workers to meet that demand, illegal immigration will continue, our economy will suffer, and our national security will continue to be threatened.

Congress needs to arrive quickly at a broad-based solution. Nothing less than the future of our businesses — and of the American economy — is at stake.

**For assistance or guidance in placement of your op-ed, please contact Matt Rhodes, director of marketing/communications, at (202) 289-3132 or [mrhodes@ahla.com](mailto:mrhodes@ahla.com).**



## Sample Letter to the Editor: Immigration Reform

Editor:

Our current immigration system is not working.

Employers are unsure whether workers they screen are legal due to the proliferation of fraudulent identification. There is no adequate access to authorized workers when jobs go unfilled.

A new system is required to bring needed foreign workers into the U.S. when American workers cannot be found and which recognizes the presence, need, and contributions of workers currently undocumented.

Reform must also protect our borders and provide an adequate temporary worker screening program that allows the government to focus on identifying those who wish to do us harm and prevent their entry to the country.

The Senate-passed immigration reform bill is a first step. Members of the House of Representatives must now act and approve their version of immigration reform.

Immigrants are critical to the growth of the American economy. As long as there are jobs Americans are not filling and there are no programs that allow foreign workers to meet that demand, illegal immigration will continue, our economy will suffer, and our national security will continue to be threatened.

Congress needs to act now. Nothing less than the future of our businesses — and of the American economy — is at stake.

**For assistance or guidance with submission of your letter to the editor, please contact Matt Rhodes, director of marketing/communications, at (202) 289-3132 or [mrhodes@ahla.com](mailto:mrhodes@ahla.com).**



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To provide feedback on a congressional town hall meeting you have attended, send an email, including your contact information, to [gov.affairs@ahla.com](mailto:gov.affairs@ahla.com).



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