



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

**Statement from Church World Service, for submission to the Congressional Record,
pertaining to the House Judiciary Committee Hearing on Employment Verification,
Thursday, February 10th, 2011**

As a network of 37 member communions and 34 refugee resettlement affiliates and local offices across the United States, Church World Service expresses its concern regarding recent proposals to mandate the broad use of employment verification systems to identify and remove undocumented immigrants.

Mandatory implementation of the E-Verify system would have a devastating impact on children and families of workers fired. While tensions are high in regard to immigration, the reality of children separated from their detained or deported parents calls all of us to work for more reasonable and humane policies.

Rather than mandating that all employers implement E-Verify, which is a broad, expensive and risky proposal, Church World Service calls on all members of Congress to instead provide a pathway by which undocumented immigrants can earn their legal status, increase visas for both family-based and employment-based immigration, and focus enforcement efforts on perpetrators of human trafficking, violent criminals, and bad-actor employers who lure and exploit immigrant workers.

Once undocumented immigrants are provided an opportunity by which they can legalize their status, E-Verify may play a role in helping employers comply with both immigration and labor laws. Until such an opportunity is provided, however, Church World Service will oppose enforcement-only provisions such as mandating the use of E-Verify.

These limited proposals will not do anything to fix the broken U.S. immigration system, but instead unnecessarily burden employers, increase job losses, and penalize immigrant families. We call for immigration reform first and foremost, rather than for such limited efforts, and ask all members of Congress to focus instead on real reforms that will move the United States forward in repairing our immigration system, keeping families together, and improving conditions and wages for all employees.

Currently, the E-Verify system can be utilized by any employer seeking to validate the immigration status of new hires. While we recognize the utility such a tool can bring to a business, the E-Verify system can also be misused by employers to engage in unfair hiring and firing practices, and can have negative consequences for those caught in the system, either due to error or standard practice.

Rather than protecting American workers, a mandatory E-Verify program could jeopardize an estimated 770,000 jobs and cause paperwork complications for more than 1.2 million U.S. workers¹. In 2009 alone, an estimated 80,000 workers were erroneously caught up in the E-Verify system, a staggering number that would undoubtedly increase substantially should E-Verify be mandated for all employers². Mandating that all businesses in the United States implement E-Verify would pose a high burden for employers, especially small businesses that don't have large Human Resources departments to deal with the many quirks still in the E-Verify system.

Some argue that the E-Verify program would open up jobs for U.S.-born workers. However, unemployment rates are actually lower in places with larger immigrant populations, showing that immigrants actually increase job opportunities for U.S.-born workers by stimulating local economies³. In addition, jobs held by undocumented immigrants, particularly those in agriculture, construction, manufacturing and various service industries, are not jobs that U.S.-born workers are seeking. Removing immigrants from jobs through E-Verify would only result in closed factories, unpicked crops, and businesses going under, which would affect U.S.-born workers just as much as immigrant workers.

¹ "Findings of the E-Verify Program Evaluation," Westat, Rockville, MD. Dec 2009. p. 117. <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/E-Verify/E-Verify/Final%20E-Verify%20Report%2012-16-09_2.pdf>. About 0.8 percent of workers receive an erroneous tentative non-confirmation, and approximately 0.5 percent of work-authorized individuals receive a final non-confirmation in error, multiplied by about 154,287,000 million workers in the U.S. for the 1.2 million and 771,435 figures respectively.

² Moran, Tyler. "Expanding E-Verify will Undermine Job Growth and Cripple Small Businesses." Jan.2011. <<http://www.nilc.org/immsemplymnt/ircaempverif/e-verify-facts-2011-01-26.pdf>>.

³ Ibid.

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