FACT SHEET

Immigration

Issue Summary: *Farming and ranching are labor-intensive endeavors. Many farms and ranches around the United States are dependent upon immigrant laborers to help produce the food, fuel and fiber we consume. Agriculture depends upon a reliable and available work force.*

- In 2012, there were approximately 1.1 million hired farmworkers, on average, working on U.S. farms, approximately 71% of which were immigrant laborers. There are also approximately 3 million migrant seasonal farm laborers working on U.S. farms each year.

- The Department of Homeland (DHS) Security estimates that there are about 11.4 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. and approximately 4 percent of them are unauthorized farmworkers.

- The H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program provides a legal means to bring foreign-born workers to the U.S. to perform seasonal farm labor. In order to bring migrant workers into the U.S. under this program, an employer must demonstrate that due to a shortage of domestic workforce he was unable to recruit U.S. workers. The H-2A authorized workers account for less than 5 percent of the hired farm work force.

- E-Verify is an internet based system operated by DHS in partnership with the Social Security Administration that compares information reported by employees with government records to verify the job applicant's work authorization.

- Currently, federal law does not require all employers to use E-Verify, but some states mandate its use. Proposed federal legislation would require all employers, including agricultural employers, to use the E-Verify system. (S. 744, H.R. 1772).

- The Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill in June 2013. This bill contains numerous reforms including a 13-year path to citizenship for millions of undocumented workers, a new visa program for agricultural workers, and requires agricultural producers to use the E-Verify system. (S. 744) The House of Representatives has not considered its own immigration reform bill or the Senate bill.

- On Nov. 20, 2014, President Obama outlined his executive action on immigration. The measures, which utilize deferred actions and a set of waivers, do not address the needs of the agricultural workforce. Rather, the action prioritizes deporting felons instead of families, and requires certain undocumented immigrants to pass a criminal background check and pay taxes in order to temporarily stay in the U.S. without fear of deportation.

- The Congressional Budget Office found that commonsense immigration reform will increase real GDP by 3.3% in 2023, and 5.4% in 2033, a real increase of roughly $700 billion in 2023 and $1.4 trillion in 2033, due to higher labor force participation, increased capital investment, and increased productivity resulting from "technological advancements, such as new innovations and improvements in the production process."

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