

# ▶ MAKE IMMIGRATION WORK FOR AMERICA

America's manufacturing dominance—and thus America's economic might on the world stage—depends on a strong manufacturing workforce. But right now, manufacturers have more work to do than people able to do it. More than 400,000 manufacturing jobs remain unfilled. Without action, that number is projected to reach 1.9 million by 2033.

Manufacturers are investing heavily to attract, train and upskill homegrown talent through competitive pay and benefits, apprenticeships, educational partnerships and on-the-job training—but domestic investment alone is not sufficient. Manufacturers need merit-based, legal immigration that can help satisfy our industry's and our economy's vital workforce needs.

**The U.S. immigration system was not designed for the manufacturing workforce.** Welders, machinists and technicians—essential workers who are the backbone of manufacturing—have no legal pathways into the country. Meanwhile, existing pathways for high-skilled workers such as scientists and engineers are often too narrow to meet the demands of modern manufacturing.

Manufacturers believe that **the best, most durable solution to illegal immigration is a legal immigration system that works.** By pairing strong border security and enforcement with a modern, merit-based, employment-driven immigration system, policymakers can close the workforce gap and secure American industrial dominance for generations to come.

## BORDER SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT

Manufacturers stand behind the rule of law and the security of our nation's borders. Employers need to know that the workforce they hire is in the country legally so that they can confidently make long-term investment decisions. Strong enforcement is foundational, and it should be constructed to avoid sudden workforce disruptions by targeting individuals who pose genuine public safety or national security threats. Additional reforms should include the following:

- **Mandatory E-Verify:** An enhanced E-Verify system that provides added identity authentication options to reduce employers' vulnerability to identity fraud and provides a safe harbor against liability if used in good faith.
- **Integrity Measures:** Strong visa program integrity measures that ensure these programs function as intended, without abuse, fraud or misuse.

## A MERIT-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM THAT WORKS

### 1. High-Skilled Talent to Power America's Manufacturing Growth

- **F-1 Student Visas:** Preserve the industry's ability to efficiently hire international students graduating from American universities by ensuring flexibility for these students and avoiding burdensome restrictions and compliance requirements.
- **H-1B High-Skilled Visas:** Ensure manufacturers can access high-skilled talent by raising the annual H-1B visa cap, maintaining a reasonable fee structure, providing spousal work authorization and preserving wage requirements with stronger federal oversight.

- **Employment-Based Green Cards:** Bolster the industry’s ability to fill critical skill gaps by raising the annual cap for employment-based Green Cards, removing the ceiling on the high-skilled EB-2 category, not counting spouses and dependents toward numeric limits, and phasing out the diversity lottery to reallocate that capacity to employment-based Green Cards.
- **Manufacturing Visa Office:** Expedite visa processing via a dedicated visa office for manufacturers, so the industry can invest in building factories and training American workers without visa delays.



## 2. A Pathway to Meet America’s Essential Labor Needs

- **Year-Round Guest Worker Program:** Create a guest worker program to fill year-round, essential roles—such as welders, machinists, technicians and core production workers:
  - Flexible annual cap tied to workforce demand and unemployment levels.
  - Labor market tests and proof of job confirmation.
  - Portability among approved employers.
  - Limited duration; renewable under defined conditions.
- **Seasonal Worker Programs (H-2A/H-2B):** Expand seasonal programs, traditionally limited to hospitality and agriculture, by broadening eligibility for manufacturers, indexing program caps to labor-market conditions, streamlining certification and multiyear approvals and increasing oversight to fight fraud and abuse.
- **Workers Brought to the U.S. as Children:** Provide stability for manufacturers across the country by ensuring a stable legal status for adult workers who now face legal uncertainty due to how they were brought to the U.S. as children.

### NAM-ENDORSED LEGISLATION

Manufacturers urge Congress to support bipartisan immigration reforms to bring the U.S. closer to a legal, merit-based, employment-driven immigration system that meets our industry’s workforce needs:

- **The Dignity Act (H.R. 4393)**, sponsored by Reps. Maria Salazar (R-FL) and Veronica Escobar (D-TX), increases work-based immigration pathways, mandates 100% nationwide E-Verify, solidifies border security and prioritizes targeted enforcement, provides stability for adult workers brought to the U.S. as children and offers a seven-year renewable legal work status for long-term immigrants who arrived before 2021.
- **The Essential Workers for Economic Advancement Act (H.R. 5494)**, sponsored by Reps. Lloyd Smucker (R-PA) and Don Davis (D-NC), establishes a market-driven “H-2C” visa program to help employers find workers for long-open, hard-to-fill manufacturing-skilled positions, with strong protections for American workers and criminal background checks for applicants.