

Talking Points

Protecting Immigrant Workers' Rights Benefits All Workers

In 1903 immigrants working to improve their lives and the lives of their families founded the Laborers' International Union of North America. Then, just as now, LIUNA members – immigrants, citizens and those struggling to be so – are building America.

LIUNA is a strong advocate for comprehensive immigration reform that includes:

- Strong, humane and workable border enforcement.
- Reform of guest worker programs.
- A path for undocumented workers to come out of the shadows and earn their citizenship.
- Strong wage protections.
- Gradual implementation of a fair and efficient employment verification system.
- Respect for the unity of immigrant families.

Unfortunately, current border enforcement policies have failed to stem the flow of undocumented immigrants while benefiting smugglers and unscrupulous employers seeking cheap labor.

- The exploitation of millions of undocumented immigrant workers laboring in the shadows applies downward pressure on the wages and working conditions of all workers.
- An archaic visa policy and failed guest worker programs have created incentives for workers to overstay their visas and work without authorization. Long waiting lists and bureaucratic backlogs keep families apart for years, causing suffering while fueling more unauthorized immigration.

LIUNA opposes the creation of new guest worker programs because of the history of worker abuse in U.S. guest worker programs.

- The U.S. has yet to prove that it can implement a low-skill guest worker program where workers are not abused, under-paid, or treated as indentured servants. From the Bracero program in the 20th Century to workers here today with an H2B visa, temporary workers have been treated inhumanely and are frequently exploited.

A central component of immigration reform must be an earned path to citizenship for the 11.2 million undocumented workers and their families currently working without basic worker rights.

- While we recognize these workers lack work authorization, we also understand that deporting millions of workers who are currently laboring in a wide range of U.S. industries is unrealistic.