

The Emergency Agriculture Relief Act

Myth vs Fact

Myth: This is just another form of amnesty for illegal aliens.

Fact: How can that be? The bill requires payment of a fine, a background check, requires substantial service each year in the agricultural sector, provides no green card, no path to permanent legal residence status, no path to citizenship.

Myth: This bill just buys time for a bigger amnesty bill later.

Fact: What are the choices here? We have three options on reforming immigration laws:

- 1) Mass deportation, which few Americans say they favor and even fewer believe is realistic or achievable;**
- 2) The status quo of silent amnesty; or ,**
- 3) A thoughtful approach to what to do about the 12 million or so workers who are here now without disrupting families, our local communities and the U.S. economy.**

Myth: Farm employers just want cheap labor.

Fact: Agricultural jobs are not necessarily low-paying jobs. They are rarely minimum-wage jobs. Very few legal residents want to do this type of work. They'll choose lower hourly wages at a McDonalds or WalMart because farm work is tough, performed in all types of weather, rurally-based, and much of it is seasonal, intermittent, or even migrant.

Myth: If farm wages were higher, legal residents would do this work.

Fact: No informed person seriously claims that wages can be raised high enough to attract and retain workers who, frankly, have other job opportunities. Would your own children opt to work in the fields? Plus, you can't pick up a newspaper or turn on a television these days without seeing a story about soaring food prices. This bill helps keep farm labor supply concerns from contributing to higher food prices or the offshoring of our food supply.

Myth: We don't need to grow food in this country. It can just be imported.

Fact: The weak dollar and high energy costs mean imported foods will cost more. Who would really want to rely on other countries to feed us, as we rely on often-hostile nations for most of our oil? We have the safest and one of the most economical food supplies in the world. Let's work to keep it that way.

Myth: Immigration reform will have to wait until next year.

Fact: Next year will see several new Members of both the House and the Senate and a new administration. You can hear it now: "This is not a first-year issue for a new President." In 2010 it will be: "It's an election year. Wait until 2011!" and so on. Agriculture is uniquely vulnerable, because more than half and probably three quarters of the people doing the work lack proper immigration status. The Emergency Agriculture Relief Act is needed to stabilize the crisis until comprehensive immigration reform can be addressed.