

# NILC Statement upon House Reauthorization of Basic Pilot/E-Verify for Five More Years

JULY 31, 2008

Without meaningful reform of our nation's broken immigration system and the provision of a path to legalized status for unauthorized workers already here, an expansion of the program would be doomed to fail even were its defects corrected.

On July 31, 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to reauthorize the voluntary Basic Pilot/E-Verify program for an additional five years. The bipartisan bill, HR 6633, also included an agreement to reimburse the Social Security Administration (SSA) for its administration of the program and a requirement for two new studies on the program's effects to be conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The two studies will assess the impact of Basic Pilot/E-Verify on small businesses and further study the erroneous tentative nonconfirmation rate.

Since its inception over ten years ago, the Basic Pilot program (which was rebranded as "E-Verify" in August 2007) has been plagued by numerous problems, including unacceptably high database inaccuracies that result in the misidentification of authorized workers as being ineligible for employment and employer abuse of the program to discriminate against workers. Recent hearings in the House, by the Subcommittee for Social Security of the Ways and Means Committee, have also demonstrated that Basic Pilot/E-Verify significantly undercuts SSA's ability to process new and backlogged benefits claims and fulfill its mandate to serve the increasing number of baby-boomer retirees. These and other serious discrepancies and shortcomings have not been properly addressed or corrected. Despite this, certain members of Congress and the current administration have forcefully pushed to expand the flawed program without considering its larger impact on the U.S. economy and all members of the U.S. workforce.

NILC does not support an expansion of Basic Pilot/E-Verify, nor its reauthorization, because without meaningful reform of our nation's broken immigration system and the provision of a path to legalized status for unauthorized workers already here, an expansion of the program would be doomed to fail even were its problems corrected. However, given that the House has now voted to reauthorize the program, it is noteworthy that it has done so in a manner that attempts to minimize the impact on SSA's ability to perform its true mandate and to address some of the flaws in the program and how they affect all workers — citizens and noncitizens alike.

As the Basic Pilot/E-Verify bill moves to the Senate, we are hopeful that if members there feel it necessary to reauthorize this program, they will also acknowledge its inherent defects and deficiencies. Congress must recognize that expanding the program without providing a path to legal status for the 7 million unauthorized workers in our country is an unworkable strategy that jeopardizes our economy and continues to force unauthorized workers deeper into the shadows.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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