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Position statement:

Immigration

Due to the importance of immigrant labor to the U.S. dairy industry, we strongly believe that any final piece of legislation concerning Immigration Reform must contain the following provisions:

- An affordable & efficient guest-worker program that ensures the continued availability of immigrant labor for all of agriculture, including dairies.
Current available immigrant labor programs are overly cumbersome and do not meet the unique needs of dairy farms for long-term, skilled labor. It is imperative that the Senate immigration bill contain a guest-worker program which will serve the needs of all segments of agriculture. In order to satisfy the labor needs of dairies, it should allow for guest workers to remain with their employer for multiple years with the option to renew. A program that allowed for only seasonal help, rather than year-round, multi-year labor, would not meet the labor needs of dairies.
- A provision that allows those currently employed or with recent employment history in the U.S. to earn the right to work here legally, regardless of their current legal status.
Many dairies have invested considerable time and expense in finding qualified workers and training them to carry out jobs necessary to profitably run their business. It is essential that employers be able to retain the workers they currently employ. A Senate bill that did not contain a provision allowing current workers to earn the right to work in the U.S. legally would have a devastating effect on the U.S. economy and dairy producers throughout the country as significant numbers of them would abruptly lose trusted and highly capable workers, many of which hold highly-skilled and not easily replaced positions.
- A provision that specifies that the responsibility for ultimate verification of the legal status of a worker lies with the government, not with employers.
The immigration bill passed by the House of Representatives established severe penalties for employers whose workers are found not to be here legally. This places a tremendous burden on employers and is a requirement which would be extremely difficult to carry out. The government is the body which is capable of determining which immigration documents are genuine and which are not. Employers must not be forced to perform the job of government immigration agents by requiring them to perform legal verifications. Business owners should continue to require the documents, but it should be the government's responsibility to verify the validity of those documents.

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