



Migration and Refugee Service

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Necessary Elements for Just Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Element 3: Future Flow Worker Program

Background: As many immigrants come to the United States searching for job opportunities, one of the biggest elements of immigration reform should be assessing the U.S.'s future employment-based immigration needs and creating a fair and flexible worker program. The current number of temporary visas has been adjusted infrequently since 1990 and does not have the flexibility to adjust the number of visas available to align with changing economic conditions. Moreover, there are only 5,000 permanent visas (“green cards”) available in the employment-based immigration system. At the same time, the U.S. economy, when not in recession, will need foreign-born workers in important industries.

Issue: While many citizens agree that the current employment immigration situation is dysfunctional and stymies America’s labor needs and the global realities of the 21st century, there is disagreement as to whether a future flow worker program is a viable solution. Some immigration opponents see future flow worker programs as legal means to take jobs away from U.S. workers thereby hurting U.S. citizens and their interests. Other immigration reform advocates believe that a well-tailored future flow worker program will ease up American labor shortages, help large and small businesses and better protect foreign workers.

Position of the U.S. Catholic Bishops: The USCCB advocates for a future flow worker program which is humane to workers, fair to employers and adaptive to the needs of a globalized modern American economy. A future flow worker program also would reduce the number of workers migrating across the border and losing their lives. The USCCB promotes the creation of a future flow worker program that allows for:

- job portability enabling workers to change employers;
- workplace and living wage protections for workers in order to reduce exploitation, discrimination and abuse;
- protection of workers’ family unity and community by including provisions that allow for immediate family members of eligible workers to join them in the U.S.
- labor market tests to ensure that U.S. workers are not displaced;
- optional path to citizenship after a certain time period.