

Absent comprehensive reform of our immigration laws that includes a realistic way of legalizing the millions of undocumented workers now living and working in the U.S., imposition of the mandatory use of the E-Verify electronic work authorization verification system will meet with limited success.

The success of an electronic work authorization verification system will depend on the full participation of every one of the estimated 7.7 million employers and at least 154 million U.S.-born and foreign-born workers in the United States. If it is used in an attempt to enforce a broken system, it will not have the cooperation needed to succeed.

With such a large percentage of our workforce without legal status—five percent overall and substantially more in some industries—the imposition of E-Verify would lead to employers and workers finding a way around the system.

Off the Books; Off the Tax Rolls: One way to bypass the system is to pay workers off the books. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the imposition of E-Verify absent immigration reform would result in a loss of more than \$17 billion in revenue for the government over a period of ten years, due to the increase in workers who would be working off the books. In contrast, comprehensive reform that included a legalization of the undocumented workforce would generate an estimated \$1.5 trillion to the economy as a whole over the next ten years, and this extra economic activity would boost tax revenue.

Finding the Right Documents: Another strategy for adapting to E-Verify in the absence of reform is for unauthorized workers to use documents that allow them to bypass the system. According to government statistics, E-Verify works only 50% of the time to identify workers who are not authorized to work, due to the use of legitimate documents that allow undocumented workers to pass through the verification system. Mandatory E-Verify without reform will force greater reliance on such documents.

Throwing in the Towel: In the alternative, in some industries that are very dependent on undocumented workers, such as agriculture, the imposition of E-Verify would likely lead to many businesses going out of business or moving operations to other countries. Applied to agriculture, this means that more of our food will be imported, reducing our food security.

Bad for American Workers: Whether employers move their workers off the books or off shore, the effect on American workers would not be positive. American workers (particularly in certain industries) would either have to compete with an underground, more exploitable workforce, or they would be put out of a job if their employer moves operations outside of the U.S. In agriculture, which is very dependent on an undocumented workforce, for every job lost in farming, three jobs are lost in related support industries.

Without a comprehensive overhaul of our immigration laws, the imposition of mandatory E-Verify would be a serious blow to our economy, one which we can little afford in a period of economic recovery.