

Grassley works to extend E-Verify and programs for legal immigration

Written by Grassley Press
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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate last week gave unanimous approval to bipartisan legislation co-authored by Senator Chuck Grassley to extend the E-Verify program, an Internet-based system that allows employers to determine the eligibility of employees to work in the United States.

“E-Verify has proven its value in helping to enforce immigration laws by giving employers a tool to help determine if individuals are eligible to work in the United States,” Grassley said. “Extending the current program is very necessary until E-Verify is made a requirement for employers. Programs like E-Verify and the others extended by the Senate safeguard opportunities for legal workers and recognize the value of legal immigrants to American society.”

E-Verify allows employers to submit voluntarily information reported on an employee’s Form I-9 to the Department of Homeland Security, which works in partnership with the Social Security Administration to determine worker status. There is no charge to employers to use E-Verify, and more than 392,911 employers use the program.

E-Verify was established in 1996 as a pilot program with employers in five states allowed to participate. The pilot program was reauthorized in 2001, expanded to employers in every state in 2003 under Grassley-authored legislation, and reauthorized again in 2008 and 2009. Since 1996, improvements have been made to decrease error rates with an appeal process, a

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self-check for individuals to make certain their information is correct, and a photo-tool capability to improve the ability of employers to determine if document photos match potential employees.

In addition to a three-year extension of E-Verify, Grassley helped to pass three-year extensions for several other immigration programs, including:

1) Non-Minister Religious Worker Visa Program. This program allows up to 5,000 Special Immigrant Visas to be issued each year. Religious organizations can use these visas to sponsor foreign nationals to come to the United States and provide services for people in some of the nation's neediest and most underserved areas.

2) Immigrant Investor Program. This program, known as EB-5, is designed to stimulate the U.S. economy through job creation and capital investment by foreign investors. The program allows 10,000 visas each year to individuals who invest between \$500,000 and \$1 million in a new commercial enterprise that creates or preserves at least 10 full-time jobs within two years of the investor's admission to the United States.

3) J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. This program waives a requirement for up to 30 international medical graduates each year to return to their country of nationality for at least two years before returning to the United States if the J-1 physicians agree to practice medicine in a federally designated health professional shortage area or medically underserved area.

Grassley serves as Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary which is responsible for immigration legislation.