

**Answers submitted by Rosemary Jenks, Cofounder and Policy Director of the Immigration Accountability Project, in response to the questions submitted for the record by Rep. Glenn Grothman.**

- 1. In your written testimony, you emphasize that E-Verify is a critical tool for deterring illegal immigration to the United States. Could you explain in more detail why E-Verify is such an important component of United States immigration policy and how it strengthens the integrity of our legal workforce?**

E-Verify is the linchpin of a comprehensive strategy to reduce illegal immigration because it targets the primary driver of illegal entry: the employment magnet. Most illegal aliens enter the United States for economic opportunity. Illegal aliens perform a rational cost-benefit analysis before coming to the United States. If they believe that a U.S. job will be easily found and will pay enough to recoup the costs of the journey (including smuggling fees), send funds home to family, and survive in America, then the benefit is worth the risk of apprehension. If the benefit of easily obtainable jobs is removed, on the other hand, the costs of the journey and the risk of apprehension may outweigh the potential rewards, deterring them from coming at all.

E-Verify is the next logical step beyond the 1986 "I-9" system, which relied on employers—who are not document experts—to manually verify the validity of employee paperwork. The widespread availability of fraudulent documents makes this an impossible task for employers, especially when combined with the threat of discrimination-based lawsuits. E-Verify allows employers to confirm information against Social Security Administration (SSA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) records virtually instantaneously and, importantly, to rely on that confirmation.

The E-Verify system continues to demonstrate high levels of efficiency and accuracy as it scales to meet increasing state mandates and voluntary employer enrollments. The vast majority of employees (98.5 percent in FY 2024) are verified nearly instantaneously, confirming that the system effectively identifies authorized workers with minimal disruption to the hiring process.

- 2. Your written testimony also notes that cartels earn billions of dollars each year smuggling individuals into the United States by promising that they will easily find work once they arrive. You argue that cutting off access to illegal employment is one of the most effective ways to reduce the cartels' influence and financial power. How would a mandatory nationwide E-Verify system reduce the incentive to cross the border illegally and weaken the cartels that profit from human smuggling?**

A mandatory nationwide E-Verify system would strike at the core of the business model used by international smuggling cartels. Cartels generate [billions](#) of dollars on the promise that illegal aliens will easily find employment upon arrival. If E-Verify is made

mandatory, this promise becomes demonstrably false, significantly reducing the "marketability" of the cartels' services to prospective illegal aliens. Word of the new, restrictive employment situation in the United States would travel around the globe virtually instantly and would dramatically shift the cost-benefit analysis mentioned above.

Furthermore, many illegal aliens arrive in the United States in debt to cartels. By cutting off access to the legal workforce, mandatory E-Verify would severely limit the ability of these individuals to pay off smuggling debts. Not only would this reduce the alien's willingness to take on a smuggling debt, it would reduce the cartels' willingness to front the cost of the journey. Limiting the clientele of the cartels to only those who can pay up front and who don't need a job to survive in the United States would reduce both the revenue streams and the financial power of the cartels.

- 3. Recent public reports involving ICE worksite enforcement actions have unfortunately confirmed that some companies in this country continue to hire illegal immigrants and foreign workers whom they know, or should know, do not have legal work authorization. Companies that engage in this practice undermine American workers by depressing wages and displacing lawful employees. These employers also shift labor costs onto the American taxpayer, because many of the off the books workers they hire end up on Medicaid or other public assistance programs. Would a mandatory E-Verify requirement help correct this problem by ensuring that employers cannot knowingly or negligently hire illegal workers, and would it help restore a level playing field for American workers and responsible employers?**

Mandatory E-Verify is essential to creating a level playing field for both American workers and law-abiding businesses, as well as for protecting the American taxpayer. It is well established that unscrupulous employers use illegal labor to reduce wages and benefits. This means that Americans and other legal workers have to compete for jobs at substandard wages and with poor working conditions. If these legal workers can't make ends meet at the wage levels suppressed by illegal workers, they are more likely to rely on public benefits. Similarly, the illegal workers will turn to public assistance to fill the gaps caused by low wages. American taxpayers, then, bear the costs of both the displaced American workers, as well as the illegal workers. "Cheap labor," it turns out, is only cheap for the unscrupulous employer, not for society.

Similarly, unscrupulous employers undercut their law-abiding competitors by hiring illegal labor at reduced wages and ignoring safety or benefit standards. An employer that hires illegal aliens can underbid an employer that hires only legal workers, and potentially even put that law-abiding employer out of business. In the absence of mandatory E-Verify, diligently following the law is a competitive disadvantage. That is untenable in a nation built on the rule of law.