

**Testimony before House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Business Community Briefing on Immigration Policy
Presented by Eric Stafford, Senior Director of Government Affairs**



Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Mister Chairman and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Business Coalition for Immigration Reform and the 26 organizations listed at the end of my testimony, we appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee today on immigration policy.

Today we would like to give a comprehensive overview of immigration policy focusing on four main points: 1) immigration is a Federal issue; 2) economic reality of harmful policies; 3) politics of immigration policy; 4) how harmful immigration policies are not based on free market ideals.

Going back to the 1800's when Europeans came to America in the largest mass migration in the history of the world, 15 year old Annie Moore and her two brothers were the first immigrants to be processed through the Federal Ellis Island, NY Immigration Facility on January 2, 1892. Over the next 62 years, over 12 million immigrants were processed through Ellis Island alone. According to the Ellis Island website, during those times, "as long as an immigrant's papers were in order and they were in reasonably good health, the Ellis Island inspection process would last approximately three to five hours." In today's information age, it only takes around 10 years.

Our country's immigration policy is broken. It has long been ignored by Congress and over the past five years, states have unfortunately started taking the issue into their own hands. This new patchwork of immigration policy leads to concerns over multi-state compliance. For example, a business located in Olathe, KS could be in compliance under Kansas law, but out of compliance when conducting business in Missouri.

Thankfully in recent weeks, a group of eight bipartisan Senators in Washington, D.C., have laid out a comprehensive immigration reform plan which focuses on border security, modernizes and streamlines the current immigration system and addresses those currently in the country.

Part of the Governor's Roadmap for Kansas includes the desire to grow the Kansas economy. This includes increasing private sector employment in Kansas. In many industries, one of the most limiting factors involved in expansion of business in the state is the lack of an adequate labor force. We assure you if Kansas takes similar steps as Arizona, Alabama, Georgia and others, we will see significant economic damage to our state.



The Kansas Chamber, with headquarters in Topeka, is the leading statewide pro-business advocacy group moving Kansas towards becoming the best state in America to do business. The Chamber represents small, medium and large employers all across Kansas.

Coalition Testimony 2

In response to Alabama's law, the toughest in the nation, the Center for Business and Economic Research from the University of Alabama's College of Commerce and Business Administration concluded in a report "Instead of boosting state economic growth, the law is certain to be a drag on economic development even without considering costs associated with its implementation and enforcement."

Alabama estimated their total economic loss to the state to be around \$2.5 billion. Georgia, another state which passed harmful, anti-immigrant legislation suffered significant economic harm as well. In 2011 alone, 50% of produce never made it to market and the total economic loss approached \$1 billion. It is also important to mention the financial impact of the Arizona/Alabama-style legislation on local governments by dumping the enforcement burden on local law enforcement agencies.

America's immigration system is failing its businesses. In an article titled "The Age of Mediocrity" Charles Payne writes about how the United States is not only falling behind in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, but US students are "being left in the dust." In 1994, there were 6.2 US-born workers in these fields for every foreign-born worker. In 2006, those numbers were 3.1 to 1.0 US-born to foreign. Not only are we failing to educate our children in the highest demand fields, but we are making it nearly impossible to import the world's best talent.

When listening to the arguments by the anti-immigrant crowd, we hear employers are taking advantage of workers by paying below average wages and immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans. Neither claim is true. A UMKC study on the economic impact of immigrants in Kansas and Missouri concluded that "Even if every unemployed non-immigrant were able and available to take a job currently held by an immigrant, there would still be almost 50,000 jobs not taken."

The anti-immigrant movement is backed by organizations which simply view humans as liabilities, rather than assets. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) clearly states on their website that one goal is "to set legal immigration at the lowest feasible levels consistent with the national security, economic, demographic, environment and socio-cultural interests of present and future."

Our country did not prosper by adopting restrictionist and protectionist policies as those advocated by FAIR. America grew strong on the hope and vision of opportunity for everyone, by embracing the largest mass migration in the history of the world. These policies are not free market. They limit competition. They limit labor, which in itself is and should remain a free market.

Government should only intervene when employers cannot find a sufficient number of workers for their industry. Government should be able to adapt and rapidly respond to the needs of industry, and work to import talent to fill vacancies when labor resources are not available. Canada for example, rewards immigrants by moving them to the top of the line if they have high demand skill sets needed by employers.

I'll close with a statement from Grover Norquist who spoke at a breakfast some of you attended the first week of the legislative session. He said "you can erase a lot of good policies by passing a bad one. If you have a great tax climate, but a poor immigration policy, you can do great damage to your state."

Coalition Testimony 3

We encourage you as leaders of our state to continue with the good policies being pursued today. The rest of the country is watching Kansas right now on how conservative leaders govern. Together let's show them true immigration reform embraces free market, limited government principles, and avoid the costly mistakes other states have made through anti-business, anti-growth policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the business community's perspective on immigration policy. I would be happy to answer any questions.

**Corporate Immigration Compliance
Institute**

**Greater Kansas City Chamber of
Commerce**

Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce

Kansas Economic Progress Council

**Kansas Agribusiness Retailers
Association**

Kansas Building Industry Association

Kansas Chamber of Commerce

Kansas Contractors Association

Kansas Cooperative Council

Kansas Corn Growers Association

Kansas Dairy Association

Kansas Economic Development Alliance

Kansas Farm Bureau

Kansas Grain and Feed Association

Kansas Livestock Association

**Kansas Manufactured Housing
Association**

Kansas Pork Association

**Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality
Association**

**Kansas Society for Human Resource
Management**

**Kansans for Sensible Immigration
Policy**

**Manhattan Area Chamber of
Commerce**

Mid-America Green Industry Council

Overland Park Chamber of Commerce

Travel Industry Association of Kansas

**Unified Government of Wyandotte
County / Kansas City**

**Wichita Independent Business
Association**