Press Release
May 23, 2007

EWIC Applauds Bi-Partisan and Administration Efforts on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

As the business coalition concerned with the severe shortage of “essential workers” in the U.S., the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition (EWIC) commends the bipartisan Senate and Administration negotiating group for a tremendous effort in crafting draft legislation to start Congressional consideration. We voice our guarded support of the Senate legislation, but our ultimate position on final legislation will turn on whether important concerns with the current proposal are resolved. For close to a decade, EWIC has advocated for sensible reform of our nation’s immigration laws to better serve both the economic and national security needs of America.

After reviewing the draft text of the bipartisan deal announced last Thursday, EWIC believes the Senate should use the amendment process to improve the bill. The status quo is clearly unacceptable, exposing employers to unfair liability and worker shortages under a dysfunctional system, and a growing patchwork of state and local laws. EWIC believes that the following important concerns can be addressed in a final product consistent with the core principles of this agreement:

- **“Triggers”** detailed in Title I that must be certified before the worker programs laid out in Titles IV and VI can commence must be objective and achievable.
- The temporary worker program should be robust, accommodate the needs of the economy, and must be workable. We must ensure adequate visa numbers, including a mechanism to adjust numbers based upon market demand.
- The merit-based point system must accommodate many industries in which the worker shortages are most acute. We may need to augment the proposed point system to address our industries and to facilitate the transition to permanent residence for those who qualify.
- The electronic employment verification system in Title III is a critical program to business. It impacts all 7 million businesses in the U.S. and must be rolled out and implemented in a realistic fashion. Business must have a fast, reliable and cost efficient way to verify all workers. We hope that concerns we have raised in the course of the drafting process can be further addressed during the Senate floor debate.
- Preemption of state laws is imperative to ensure that state and municipalities are precluded from implementing immigration-related laws.

The business community understands the complexity and politics surrounding the issues, and supports significant parts of this compromise agreement. As such, EWIC is eager to work with the Senate as the legislation proceeds through the amendment process.

The Essential Worker Immigrant Coalition (EWIC) is a broad-based coalition of national businesses and trade associations from across the industry spectrum concerned with the shortage of both semi-skilled and unskilled (“essential worker”) labor. EWIC supports policies that facilitate the employment of essential workers by U.S. companies that are unable to find American workers (www.ewic.org). For further information, contact EWIC co-chairs Laura Reiff at (703) 749-1372, Randy Johnson at (202) 463-5448, John Gay at (202) 331-5912 or Craig Silvertooth at (202) 546-7584.