

Florida Employers for Immigration and Visa Reform

March 22, 2007

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Florida Chamber of Commerce
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Florida Nursery Grower & Land-
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Florida Restaurant and Lodging
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Florida TaxWatch Center for
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Florida Transportation Builder's
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RRB Systems International
The Greater Sarasota Chamber
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Washington Economics Group

Senator Mel Martinez
HSOB- Hart Senate Office Building
Room 317
Constitution Avenue and 2nd Street, NE
Washington, DC 20510-0906

Dear Senator Martinez:

Florida Employers for Immigration and Visa Reform (FEIVR), a recently created call-to-action group formed by Florida business leaders and visa policy and immigration experts, would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your tireless support and efforts to promote legislation providing comprehensive immigration reform.

FEIVR members include businesses that cross all industries representing each major area of Florida. We are reaching out to other business leaders to bring a personal message to Florida's congressional delegation to push for comprehensive immigration and visa reform, and stop the staggering losses to Florida's economy.

From agriculture to residential and commercial real estate, from the hotel and tourism industry to high-tech companies, hospitals, nursing homes, construction and other businesses, there is no doubt that our nation's restrictive and punitive immigration practices are costing our state millions upon millions of dollars in losses.

We need, and strongly support, comprehensive immigration reform that regulates the status of undocumented workers in our state and institutes a reliable, flexible guest worker visa program as well as the opportunity for most of the hard-working undocumented immigrants to become permanent residents. We equally need and support a complete review and overhaul of legislation and consular practices that have unjustifiably and unreasonably curtailed immigration options for foreign business investors and highly qualified professionals in all business fields, including registered nurses and other healthcare professionals so sorely needed in our State.

By various national estimates, the 2008 H-1B visa cap of 65,000 is expected to be reached the very first day that application submissions will be accepted, namely April 2, 2007. Congress is turning a blind eye to the country's business realities, if this cap is not significantly raised within a very short time, i.e., immediately.

Many U.S. consulates have taken it upon themselves to interpret the investor visa regulations so narrowly that foreign business investment in Florida has become largely impossible. Especially the London Consulate has decided that British investors will no longer be granted E-2 visas, no matter how much they have invested for the purchase of a business. We hope that we will have the opportunity to give you an overview of the London Consulate's totally outrageous and arbitrary visa refusal policy so that you and your staff will be in a position to evaluate to what extent our government officials in London are causing Florida business failures and job losses.

www.FEIVR.org

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Our state, our languishing real estate market, and our tourism industry are not well-served by our short-sighted immigration policies with respect to tourists and seasonal visitors. While we understand that security concerns are of utmost importance, it is undeniable that the harassment that many European and other foreign homeowners have to endure in immigration inspection, if they return to their Florida home several times a year, is unnecessary and counter-productive. What are we gaining, if they abandon their properties and choose another vacation destination? Many foreigners have abandoned the dream of owning a home in Florida because, from immigration inspection problems to endless driver's license renewals, they are tired of confronting the many hurdles our federal and state governments force them to face.

FEIVR is committed to backing comprehensive immigration reform, including legalizing many of the undocumented workers, instituting a meaningful guest worker program, eliminating employment-based green card backlogs, and reforming the visa application process, and simplifying visitor inspection and admission procedures.

We would greatly welcome the opportunity for some of the members of our organization to meet with you to discuss these problems and issues in detail, and to suggest solutions that will be beneficial to Florida's economy.

Sincerely,

Florida Employers for Immigration
and Visa Reform Member Organizations