

Central Florida firms believe immigration overhaul would boost business

By: Anjali Fluker – March 1, 2013

Everyone from President Barack Obama and Congress to state lawmakers and local businesses agree on at least one thing this year: The nation's immigration system needs to be overhauled.

Now.

At the federal level, two proposals are expected to be considered in the coming months. They would look at first securing U.S. borders and then giving the nation's estimated 11 million undocumented residents a legal path to citizenship, as well as expanding visa and green card programs to bring in more talented foreign workers, particularly those trained in science, technology, engineering and math.

About 600,000 of the Sunshine State's 9 million workers are unauthorized to work in the U.S. - about 6.6 percent - which puts Florida at No. 7 nationwide for states with the most undocumented workers.

The economic benefits of making those workers legal could be immense. The Cato Institute estimates comprehensive reform could add at least \$1.5 trillion to the nation's gross domestic product during the next decade by creating jobs, raising wages, increasing consumption and generating more tax revenue.