E-Verify: A Triple Loser; Kills Jobs, Burdens Businesses, Costs Taxpayers

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Washington, D.C.--(ENEWSPF)--September 15, 2011. Today, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) plans to mark up a bill that will make E-Verify, the government's Internet-based system that verifies whether employees are authorized to work, mandatory for all employers in the United States. The Center for American Progress hosted a conference call yesterday to discuss Smith's bill, the Legal Workforce Act (**H.R. 2885**). Participating in the call were leading experts and a U.S. citizen who lost her job because of E-Verify.

Story continues below:

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Marshall Fitz, American Progress's Director of Immigration Policy, assessed the panel's stark conclusions: "With our economy still struggling to right itself, it is deeply disturbing that our elected officials would contemplate a policy proposal that is certain to stymie economic growth. Making E-Verify mandatory will cause hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers to lose their jobs. It will cost small businesses, the lifeblood of the nation's economy, $2.6 billion to implement. And the Congressional Budget Office says such a program will drive more workers off the books, leaving U.S. taxpayers to foot a whopping $17 billion bill. Most perplexing of all is why Smith would invite these consequences for a system that can't identify unauthorized workers **more than half the time**."

Tyler Moran, the director of Policy at the National Immigration Law Center, noted that this expensive government mandate would cost 770,000 Americans their jobs. She then pointed out that, in addition to being absurd policy with unemployment stuck at 9 percent, it also contradicts the Republican leadership's stated agenda: "What's ironic is that what Smith is proposing is in direct conflict with the Republican leadership agenda—job creation and generally keeping small businesses afloat."

That wasn't the only hypocrisy exposed during the call. Dan Griswold, director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the CATO Institute, pointed out that by increasing the burden on business, this proposal runs directly counter to Republican rhetoric about cutting red tape and eliminating regulations. Griswold also persuasively argued that: "This bill is being sold under the false hope that its going to create jobs for millions of Americans looking for work." Fitz added: "The truth is, if it actually succeeded in driving 7 or 8

million workers out of the United States, it would create a **$2.6 trillion** cumulative loss to GDP over 10 years.”

The most important point in the call, however, was registered by Jessica St. Pierre. She is a U.S. citizen who was fired from her job and out of work for three months because of an error in the E-Verify system. St. Pierre was a stark reminder that this is not an abstract policy debate but rather a debate in which the stakes are high for every worker in this country. As she put it, “I had done everything right, including going to all the proper agencies to get this resolved. I felt so helpless, like there was nothing I could do.”

Mandating E-Verify, as the Smith bill would do, makes no sense as an immigration enforcement measure since the system fails to catch undocumented immigrants more than half the time. More importantly, this job-killing, business burdening measure could not come at a worse time for the American people.

In the coming days and weeks we will see whether the zeal of anti-immigrant hardliners trumps the party’s purported commitment to fiscal sanity.

> **Press Call: E-Verify Will be a Lose-Lose for Workers, Business Owners, and Our Nation’s Economy** (mp3)
>
> **The 10 Numbers You Need to Know About E-Verify: What It Will Cost Employers, Employees, and Taxpayers** by Philip E. Wolgin
>
> **Seen and (Mostly) Unseen: The True Costs of E-Verify** by Philip E. Wolgin

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