



## **NRCA Statement on the Workforce for an Expanding Economy Act**

**March 15, 2019**

The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) commends Reps. Lloyd Smucker (R-PA) and Francis Rooney (R-FL) for introducing the “Workforce for an Expanding Economy Act (H.R. 1740) in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation takes an innovative approach to visa reform designed to address workforce needs in the roofing industry.

A chronic shortage of qualified workers is the most significant limitation on the ability of roofing industry employers to grow their businesses, despite providing high-paying, family sustaining jobs (the 2017 median pay for roofing workers was \$18.74 per hour according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Most contractors indicate they could be doing 10 to 20 percent or more work if they could fill vacant positions, which translates to an estimated \$3.6 billion to \$7.2 billion in lost economic activity annually. Workforce shortages in roofing are expected to become even more acute in the future because of an aging workforce, other demographic trends and the ongoing rebuilding efforts resulting from recent hurricanes and other disasters.

“With a strong economy and unemployment at its lowest level in decades, now is the time for Congress to act on legal immigration reform that meets workforce needs,” said Reid Ribble, NRCA’s chief executive officer. “We want to commend Representatives Smucker and Rooney for their leadership in introducing this innovative approach to visa reform, and we look forward to working with them and other lawmakers on a bipartisan basis to advance this proposal.”

“The BLS projects employment in roofing will grow by 11 percent in the decade between 2016 and 2026 (faster than average U.S. job growth), and this demand cannot be met by native born workers alone.”

H.R. 1740 would provide for a temporary worker program that is governed by market forces, protects U.S. workers, and enables employers to obtain the workers needed to grow their businesses. The bill establishes a flexible pilot program that includes the following:

- Strict requirements that employers must follow in seeking available U.S. workers before utilizing the pilot program;
- A requirement that all employers participate in E-Verify as a condition of utilizing the pilot program;

- Provide employers and employees with greater portability by enabling workers to change jobs and work for any qualifying employer who has tested the labor market and proven they are unable to hire an American worker for the position; and,
- The opportunity to participate is limited only to counties or metro areas where the unemployment rate is less than 5 percent.

These and other provisions in the legislation will ensure that the pilot program is responsive to the needs of both workers and employers. Our dysfunctional immigration system will not be fixed if it fails to address the workforce needs of the roofing industry.

Established in 1886, NRCA is one of the nation's oldest trade associations and the voice of professional roofing contractors worldwide. NRCA has approximately 3,500 members in all 50 states who are typically small, privately held companies, with the average member employing 45 people and attaining sales of about \$4.5 million per year.

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