

## **Tightening Immigration Laws Would Help Economy**

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I applaud Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray's decision to go after people and businesses that fail to pay their taxes. Given the number of President Barack Obama's cabinet nominees who failed to pay taxes, it is clear that too many Americans willfully shirk their tax obligations. It is vital that government, despite the seating of tax scofflaw Timothy Geithner as Treasury secretary, send the message that due diligence in paying taxes is a civic duty regardless of one's philosophical objection to confiscatory tax policies.

In order to facilitate Cordray's efforts, the Ohio legislature should pass and Gov. Ted Strickland should sign two pieces of legislation that would make Cordray's job easier.

First, Ohio should adopt a bill identical to the Legal Arizona Workers Act, or LAWA, that was passed in 2007 and signed by then-Gov. Janet Napolitano, who is now secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. LAWA prohibits employers in Arizona from hiring illegal immigrants and requires them to use the E-Verify system to validate the identification of potential employees. E-Verify is a fast, inexpensive Web-based system run by Homeland Security that allows employers to check its and Social Security Administration records to ensure that a potential employee is legally able to work.

Employers who violate the law risk the suspension or revocation of their license to operate. Many illegal immigrants have left Arizona and moved to states with more-lenient laws (including Ohio), where black markets in labor to exist. With Ohio's unemployment increasing, such a law would provide much-needed job opportunities for out-of-work Ohioans, skilled and unskilled. Specifically, many entry-level jobs taken by border crossers (60 percent of all illegals) and some technical-level jobs taken by people who have overstayed their work or education visas (40 percent of all illegals) would become open, as those illegally in those jobs were let go.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals -- the most liberal appellate court -- upheld LAWA, so there is little risk that an Ohio version wouldn't survive the expected court challenge from pro-illegal-immigrant groups and businesses seeking illegal cheap labor.

Next, legislators should pass a bill that requires individuals and businesses to sign a statement on their tax forms attesting that they have complied with the Ohio LAWA law, used the E-Verify system and have not avoided taxes on employees during the tax year. Those who sign the attestation and are found to have violated the laws

should be subject to felony charges and to high monetary penalties, including personal liability for business leaders.

Some businesses adopt a superficial approach to hiring by accepting any document, no matter how dubious it appears. Moreover, many people intentionally avoid paying taxes on household help, such as gardeners, maids and nannies. Ohio businesses that play by the rules and pay their taxes are forced to compete against businesses that can charge less because of the lower cost of using illegal workers. Ohio is unable to collect the requisite taxes, workers compensation fees and unemployment charges, which increases the cost for those who play by the rules.

America is a nation of immigrants. Immigrants historically have infused ideas and new ways of doing things into the economy that make us the envy of the world. The federal government must expand the number of H-1B skilled visas so that the best and brightest continue to work for America, not against it. Likewise, the government must develop a temporary-worker program that allows companies to bring in the unskilled workers they need. This program must require companies to first hire Americans willing to do the work at market rates.

America also is a nation of laws. For too long, the government failed to enforce laws to secure our borders and crack down on the hiring of illegal immigrants. It is time for states to reassert their powers and take control over their jurisdictions. With the rapidly declining job market, Ohioans deserve leaders who will fight for them.

The legislature and governor should assist Cordray's efforts by forcing more taxable labor out of the shadows, thereby opening jobs up for Ohioans and ensuring that everyone pays their fair share. Ohio jobs should be for Ohioans and legal immigrants.

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