

April 27, 2009

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

Thank you. I understand that you recently filed legislation titled the H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act of 2009. I commend your continued actions on this legislation. The system of guest workers is badly broken and serves only exploitive business interests.

The 24 national unions affiliated with our organization strongly support many of the approaches you are proposing.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) is a coalition of 24 national unions representing over four million highly skilled, professional and technical employees. DPE unions include professionals in over three hundred separate and distinct occupations in many sectors including: science, engineering and technology; health care and education; journalism, entertainment and the arts; public administration and law enforcement. DPE is the largest association of professional and technical workers in the U.S.

The Department of Labor (DOL) recently issued its employment numbers for March 2009. The U.S. economy lost another 694,000 jobs. DOL reported that in January and February the U.S. economy lost 598,000 and 651,000 jobs, respectively. In fact, according to the DOL, the U.S. economy has not created a net new job since December 2007, amounting to a total loss since then of nearly 5.5 million jobs.

The supply of U.S. students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is likely to exceed STEM jobs for the foreseeable future. The DOL projects that science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) job growth will be 120,000 jobs yearly over the next eight years. That in two months the U.S. will graduate 300,000 students with bachelor's, master's and PhD's in these same fields supports your introduction of this timely legislation.

The H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act will enhance protections within these visa programs by:

- Stepping up U.S. worker recruitment and investment;
- Improving wage standards;
- Strengthening the Department of Labor's ability to prevent and penalize obvious fraud and misrepresentation;
- Enhancing the Department of Labor's audit authority; and
- Provide H-1B and L-1 visa holders with job information and employer obligations prior to their entrance to the U.S.

These protections are long overdue. There no longer exists any justification for the H-1B and L-1 visa programs as they are written.

Again, thank you for your efforts to fix a much abused program. Thank you for standing up for the thousands of American students and workers ready and willing to answer the call of the high-tech community.

Sincerely,

Paul E. Almeida
President