

**Questions for the Record**  
**Comprehensive Immigration Reform**  
**Senator Mike Lee**  
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The new W-visa has a cap of 200,000 per year after the phase-in. The Pew Hispanic Center shows that in March 2000, the annual flow of illegal immigrants was 500,000.

- As our economy improves, will there be enough visas to fill the jobs that are available?

I fear not. As the economy improves, I fear there will not be enough W visa holders under the quotas proposed in S. 744 to fill jobs for which there are no willing or able Americans.

Unauthorized immigrants come to the U.S. to work, drawn across the border by a powerful demand for less-skilled labor. The reason for this demand: the U.S. workforce is changing. American families are having fewer children, with birthrates well below replacement level. Baby boomers are retiring: 10,000 older workers are leaving the workforce every day. And the younger workers coming up behind them are much more educated than their parents. In 1950, 64 percent of U.S. workers were high school dropouts. Today, the figure is less than 10 percent.

Together, these trends are creating a perfect storm, and it is what drew the annual inflow of 500,000 unauthorized immigrants measured by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2000. In subsequent years, Pew Hispanic Center founder Roberto Suro left Pew for the University of Southern California where he created the Mexico Migration Monitor, which continues to count the annual inflow of unauthorized Mexicans. According to his estimates, every year from 2003 and 2009, more than 350,000 unauthorized Mexicans alone entered the U.S. to work. At the height of the housing boom, in 2006 and 2007, more than 600,000 entered every year. And even in 2011, with the economy just coming out of recession, more than 150,000 came to the U.S. to fill jobs for which there were no available Americans.

The most recent numbers available from the Mexico Migration Monitor, for the first half of 2012, show a slow but continued upturn – just as one would expect with economic recovery.

Bottom line: the W Visa program is not likely to be large enough to accommodate the number of workers who entered the country illegally during the boom years of the early 2000s – or the number likely to enter in the future when the nation's economy has fully recovered.

- If there not enough visas, will we see more illegal entries?

I fear we will.

Effective immigration control requires three essential elements: border security, workplace enforcement and legal channels that can accommodate the flow of foreign workers drawn to the U.S. to fill jobs for which there are no willing and able Americans.

Border security and workplace enforcement together will restrict the flow somewhat. But unless enforcement measures are accompanied by a worker visa program, they are unlikely to stop the immigrant influx. As long as jobs beckon to poor workers on the other side of the border, nature is likely to find a way.

Some people argue that the solution to this problem is eliminating the “jobs magnet.” But surely in the long run, that would be counterproductive. We can mechanize some of the jobs that draw immigrant workers. Over time, effective enforcement might create worker shortages that force employers to pay somewhat higher wages for this work. But there are limits to how high wages can go before consumers stop buying products and services. And even with higher wages, it remains unclear how many relatively educated Americans will want to work, say, washing dishes in the back of a restaurant. (And even if they did, it would hardly be an economically productive use of their educations.) The only other way to “eliminate the jobs magnet” is to restrict economic growth so as to reduce the growth of low-skilled jobs – but that hardly seems like the right answer.

Surely a better solution is to create a visa program big enough to meet U.S. labor needs with a lawful foreign labor force.