

Statement of  
**The Honorable Saxby Chambliss**

United States Senator  
Georgia  
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STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN SAXBY CHAMBLISS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship, issued the following opening statement before a hearing titled: "Evaluating a Temporary Guest Worker Proposal."

"I appreciate the Senators and witnesses we have here today for our hearing on evaluating a temporary guest worker proposal. President Bush outlined his principles in a speech last month, and we have an Administration panel that will explain and clarify the President's principles. This is the first hearing since the President's speech, and we expect to hold a series of guest worker hearings as we move forward in the legislative process.

"Since September 11, 2001, the Administration has continued making strides to strengthen our homeland security. Over 1,000 new Border Patrol agents have been added. The Department of Homeland Security has consolidated customs agents and immigration personnel to enhance and streamline our border security. The entry-exit system, US-VISIT, is now collecting biometric information for aliens traveling to the U.S. on a visa.

"Even with our best efforts, illegal immigration remains a vast problem that is getting more and more out of control. Most estimates say there are 8 to 10 million illegal aliens in the U.S. Of those, it is estimated that 60% entered the U.S. without inspection, which is a criminal offense. Such a large number of illegal aliens creates a financial drain due to non-reimbursed medical and educational services, burdens our judicial system, and allows criminal acts to go unchecked.

"Most illegal aliens come to the U.S. seeking jobs - the majority of them from Mexico. The U.S. per capita income is \$32,000 while Mexico's per capita income is \$3,700. Most of these folks are not security threats but are hard-working individuals seeking a better life. However, illegal entry into the U.S. is a security breach that we must address. It is also unfortunately a growing business for so-called "coyotes," or human smugglers, who pack trucks full of workers and cross the border, sometimes with tragic results.

"Many U.S. employers of aliens have difficulties in finding Americans to fill jobs performed by illegal aliens. These jobs range from agriculture to construction to the carpet industry in my home state. Employers also have difficulty in determining who is legal and who is illegal due to the lack of verifiable documentation in the hiring process. This wink-and-nod cycle contributing to hiring illegal aliens must stop, while still providing a method for U.S. employers to gain access to the workers they need.

"Finally, we must respect the rule of law when it comes to immigration reform. Along with any process

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for the employment of foreign workers, there needs to be enforcement against those who remain here

illegally outside the legal system. We have a serious lack of interior immigration agents, and we need to rethink our methods for how to conduct more vigorous enforcement actions against illegal aliens.

"We need a total overhaul of our immigration policies. This overhaul should meet our national security needs and our economic interests and be a manageable policy for how many people we admit into the U.S. The logical place to start is with reform of the H2A agricultural worker program. Based on the testimony and discussion of today's hearing, I plan to work with my colleagues and introduce an H2A bill that can be a starting point for total immigration reform.

"Farmers in my home state of Georgia who use the H2A program tell me it is too burdensome and uncompetitive to use. Too often farmers are not able to get through the bureaucratic channels in time to harvest their crops. The arcane Adverse Effect Wage Rate and labor regulations can make it more cost effective to hire illegal workers rather than legal ones. And farmers who use the legal program are often the subject of frivolous lawsuits. These are some of the problems we must avoid as we reform and improve our immigration policies.

"The President has laid out his principles for guest worker legislation. Building on that framework as Congress begins the legislative process toward reform, I believe we must adhere to the following concepts:

? To control illegal immigration, we must first control our borders. We must commit to sufficient funding for our border security agencies, including Border Patrol, and our immigration enforcement agencies.

? We must treat those who are here illegally as exactly that. Under a guest worker program, they should be allowed work visas not green cards. They should not be given advantages over those who are attempting to come to the U.S. through the legal process, which we should encourage.

? Foreign workers in a guest worker program must be temporary workers.

? Guest worker participants must have a job, and we must ensure that American workers are not displaced.

? Guest worker legislation should make use of program aspects that do work well, including H2A and H1B visa programs.

? We must dedicate resources for interior enforcement and strengthen the penalties against aliens in the U.S. who are not guest workers and who continue in their illegal status.

? Employers must share the burden to facilitate a workable program and to stop the hiring of illegal aliens.

? No one in the U.S. illegally should have the privileges associated with those who are here legally.

"I understand that many of you in this room have been involved for a long time in figuring out workable immigration reforms. I appreciate your efforts, and I look forward to working with you."

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[For more information, contact Chambliss' press office at 202-224-3423.]