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**COLORADO EMPLOYERS FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM (COEIR)
URGE CONGRESS TO PASS COMPREHENSIVE REFORM NEXT WEEK**

DENVER, Colo. – With the deadline for comprehensive immigration reform looming in the Senate next week, the newly formed Colorado Employers for Immigration Reform (COEIR), a multi-industry coalition, announced its position on two key components being debated in Congress.

COEIR includes a broad base of Colorado businesses and industries, including hotel, restaurants, construction, nursery and greenhouse, landscape, agriculture, farming and many others that collectively contribute an estimated \$26 billion annually to the Colorado economy and provide approximately 500,000 jobs.

Provisions for a guest worker program and solutions to dealing with the undocumented workers are two of the major issues being debated in Congress on Monday,” said Mike Gilsdorf, board president of COEIR and CEO of Arapahoe Acres Nursery, Inc. “If the senate fails to pass comprehensive reform next week, we will see Colorado businesses negatively impacted and could experience layoffs of American workers as a result.”

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that there approximately 190,000 undocumented workers in Colorado.

“If these individuals are not allowed to work, as a state we have created a huge void in the workforce that we will not be able to fill with American workers with Colorado’s very low unemployment rate,” said Gilsdorf. According to the Colorado Department of Labor web site, the unemployment rate in Colorado was 4.0 percent in March or 105,157 citizens. COEIR members have found that very few of these unemployed apply for manual labor jobs.

Based on an informal survey of its members, COEIR estimates for every immigrant worker lost, it will cost the Colorado economy approximately \$100,000 per worker due to lack of labor required to operate. An initial poll of members showed that immigrants lost in Colorado would cause layoffs of U.S. workers due to the lack of labor needed for the businesses to perform their work.

The COEIR board supports a process that would allow undocumented workers to continue working legally if the can meet the following provisions. The undocumented work would be required to:

- Pass a security background check;
- Pay a fine for the amount of time they were in the country undocumented;
- Be currently gainfully employed and producing for the US economy;
- Learn English; and
- Participate in the process required to earn eventual citizenship.

Additionally, COEIR supports seasonal and year-round guest worker programs based on market driven factors not pre-established caps. Congress is currently debating how many guest workers should be allowed in the country and for how long.

COEIR advocates for a permanent solution to the H2B visa program for temporary, seasonal labor, an overhaul of the H-2A visa program for agriculture workers, and the creation of a year-round guest worker programs combined with clear, sensible workplace immigration enforcement.

COEIR advocates penalties for employers who do not comply with the guidelines of the guest work program, such as reporting seasonal workers who do not return to their country of origin. Additionally, the group wants to see components of the successful H2-B and H-2A visas programs continued and expanded to a year-round guest worker program. These programs require employers to seek American workers first. Only if the American labor is not available, can an employer can bring in a guest worker. The group supports the current “adverse wage program” that ensures the wages of U.S. workers are not lowered by wages paid to guest workers.

“The guest worker programs in the U.S. have been some of the most successful immigration programs since they do not take jobs away from Americans, nor lower wages,” said Gilsdorf.

For more information, visit www.COEIR.org.