

# HR Initiative Endorses Bill to Create an Effective, Mandatory Federal Employment Verification System

*HR Expert Group Applauds Option for Voluntary Use of Biometrics*

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28 -- The Human Resource Initiative for a Legal Workforce today applauded the introduction of legislation viewed as critical to strengthening the nation's broken employment verification system and to helping prevent unauthorized employment, a key component of any meaningful immigration reform effort.

The New Employee Verification Act (NEVA) introduced today is designed to provide a superior, user-friendly electronic employment verification system by replacing the current paper-based and error-prone method of verifying employment eligibility.

"With authorization for E-Verify scheduled to expire at the end of 2008, now is the time for Congress to establish a more advanced, reliable and effective employment verification system," said Susan R. Meisinger, President and CEO, Society for Human Resource Management. "With this legislation, Congress now has a clear choice: enact a system that can end document fraud and illegal employment, or continue to fund the flawed E-Verify employment verification system."

NEVA would introduce a new paperless Electronic Employment Verification System (EEVS), requiring employers to confirm eligibility by entering employee identification data through their state's "new hire" reporting program - an electronic portal they already use to enhance child support enforcement. The new program would be entirely electronic, eliminating paperwork and streamlining verification processes. Work authorization for citizens would be conducted through the Social Security Administration (SSA) and for non-citizens through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The bill also bolsters enforcement through enhanced employer penalties and by sharing with DHS information on employers with significant employee name/Social Security number mismatches.

"The current employment verification system is broken. This legislation creates a more secure system for employers and employees that will help prevent identity theft and provide more legal certainty," said National Association of Manufacturers President and CEO John Engler.

As an added level of security, the legislation would also create a voluntary Secure Electronic Employment Verification System (SEEVs) that employers may choose to use in the verification process. This system would include a standard background check and the collection of a "biometric" characteristic - such as a thumbprint - to secure an employee's identity and prevent future fraudulent use of a Social Security number for the purposes of illegal employment.

"Document fraud and identity theft are increasingly common tactics used to circumvent the immigration laws. A Secure Electronic Employment Verification System will make it much more difficult to beat the system and will offer U.S. workers the ability to prevent their Social Security

numbers from being misused by others," said Lynn Shotwell, Executive Director of the American Council on International Personnel.

To ensure privacy and system accuracy, the legislation requires direct consultation with a panel of public/private sector experts in designing the system, and also by requiring annual reporting on system performance by participating federal agencies and the Government Accountability Office.

"Employers want to be sure that they know who their employees are and that they are working legally," said Jeffrey C. McGuiness, President of the HR Policy Association. "The current system gives companies no such assurances while exposing well-intended employers to potential paperwork and other inadvertent violations. Meanwhile, the states are now adding to this burden even though immigration is clearly a federal concern. This bill gives the government and employers the tools to build a better system."

"The current system for identity verification is broken and needs fixing. This bill is what's needed, and thousands of employers will be grateful for it," Meisinger concluded.