

December 12, 2005

Dear Member of Congress:

Congress at last appears poised to take action regarding our nation's immigration policy. However, in view of the deteriorating climate and discourse on the issue, there is growing alarm in the American business community as to what the expected legislative action may encompass.

We join together as leading trade associations reflecting a broad cross-section of the American economy. Together, our industries represent many thousands of corporations, family farms, and small businesses that employ millions of American workers. Our members are the backbone of America's strength and prosperity.

American employers are suffering under a workforce and immigration status quo that is untenable and unsustainable. The last time Congress made a serious effort to comprehensively address a broken immigration system was in the late 1980's. Unfortunately, the Immigration Reform and Control Act failed to provide meaningful long-term access to a legal labor force.

Demographic realities facing our nation, including an aging workforce and projected continued job growth across the economic spectrum, indicate that we will need an increasing number of immigrants to fill jobs. Further, millions of undocumented workers currently fill jobs in our marketplace which many Americans won't do, and it is irrational to continue to deny these workers legal status and leave them in an uncertain, shadow economy. Our national security and our economy will be better off by identifying these workers, submitting them to a screening process and recognizing their contributions to our country by providing a mechanism by which they can legally work and, ultimately, under certain criteria, earn permanent residency.

Our choice, then, is either to create realistic legal channels for workers from other countries to fill jobs that Americans can not fill, or to shift whole industries offshore or stifle their ability to grow. If we do the latter, we will also lose many thousands of related managerial, supervisory, marketing, transportation, and other related jobs that are mostly filled by Americans.

Our nation is suffering from a debate on this issue that has deteriorated into emotional sound bites and fear-mongering. As Congress begins to work to address the issue, we urge you to avoid vilifying American business as the cause or the defender of a broken status quo that only Congress can fix. Our members believe in the rule of law. They will support enforcement in the context of laws that are easily understood, easy to comply with, and ensure access to a legal labor force needed to sustain a growing economy. They will reject partial solutions that target business as the problem.

We also hope that Congress will see that enforcement alone will fail to solve the illegal immigration problem. Rather, Congress must carefully consider the workforce and demographic realities that contribute to the problem, and design realistic solutions. The good news is that we have historical precedent for approaches that work. For example, a recent study by the National Foundation for American Policy demonstrated that a widely used guest worker program is an essential element of successfully managing our nation's borders. History has shown that such

programs diminish illegal entry pressure by channeling it toward legal options. The study's author, a former Bush administration immigration official, concluded as follows:

“Conservatives should not abandon belief in markets simply because the issue is immigration. Those who say we should not permit more people to work on legal temporary visas until we ‘control the border’ have it backward: The only proven way to control the border is to open up paths to legal entry, allowing the market to succeed where law enforcement alone has failed.”

Our organizations are united behind the premise that the bill Congress sends to President Bush's desk must approach the immigration issue comprehensively. In order to solve the problem in a way that sustains America's economy, Congress must combine border and interior enforcement enhancements with programs that provide access to future workers and offer a way for experienced and essential but improperly documented workers already living and working in the U.S. to earn legal status and, under certain conditions, permanent residency.

As representatives of the regulated community that will be integral to the success of meaningful reforms, we stand ready to help Congress and the President enact an immigration reform package that is both comprehensive and common-sense.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Donahue
President & CEO
US Chamber of Commerce



Robert J. Dolibois, CAE
Executive Vice President
American Nursery & Landscape Association



William A. Good, CAE
Executive Vice President
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Kirk Pickerel, CAE
President & CEO
Associated Builders & Contractors



James Singhering
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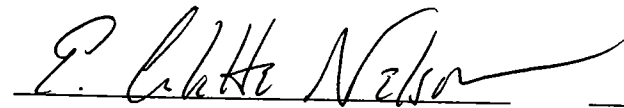
Stephen Sandherr
CEO
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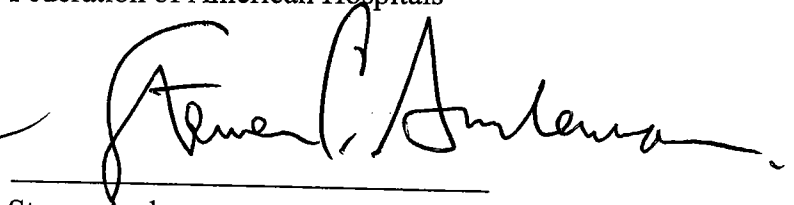
T. Peter Ruane
President & CEO
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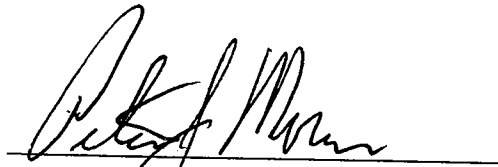
Charles Kahn
President
Federation of American Hospitals



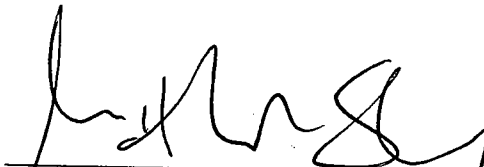
E. Colette Nelson
Executive VP
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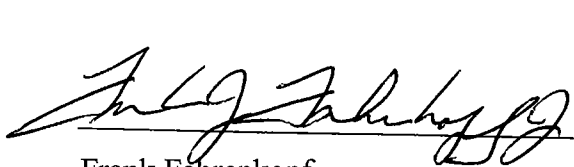
Steven Anderson
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Peter Moran
Executive VP & CEO
Society of American Florists



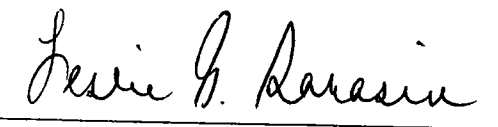
Matthew Shay
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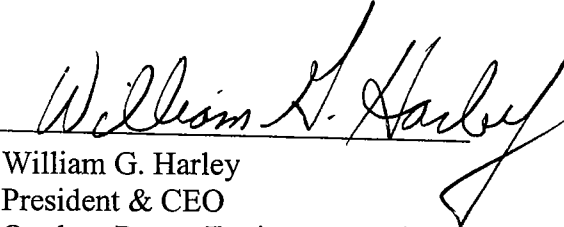
Frank Fahrenkopf
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American Gaming Association



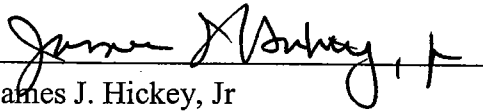
Paul Stalknacht
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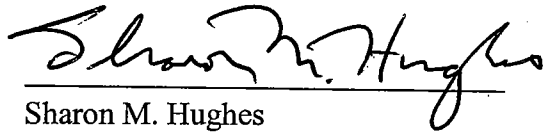
Leslie Sarasin
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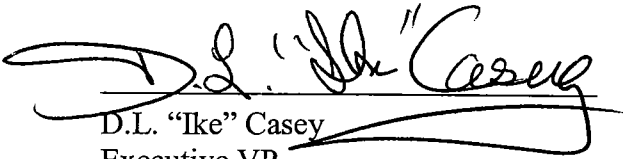
William G. Harley
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James J. Hickey, Jr
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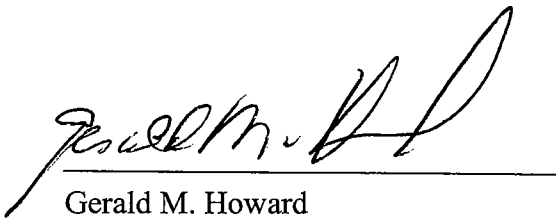
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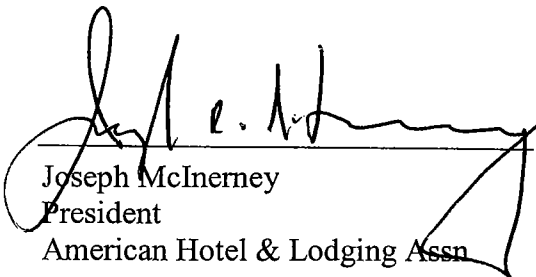
Bill Nelson
President
WineAmerica



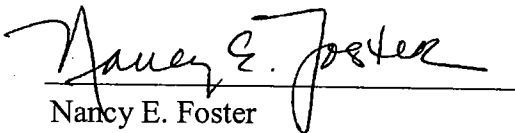
John Keeling
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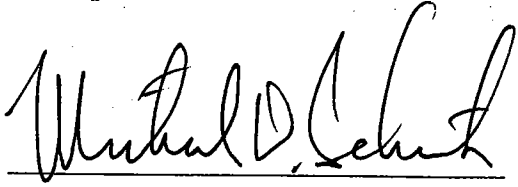
Bill Hillman
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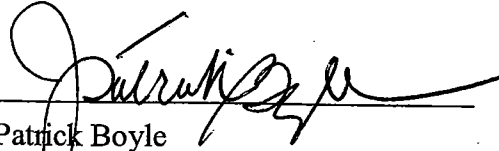
Joseph McInerney
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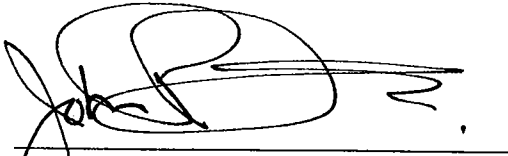
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