



[Tamar Jacoby: New Heartland Voices on Immigration](#)

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Tamar Jacoby is president of [ImmigrationWorks USA](#), a national federation of employers working to advance immigration reform. She recently wrote an opinion piece for the [Dallas Morning News](#) that raises interesting points. Here are excerpts:

In the years since Congress last considered an overhaul – since the bitter failures of 2006 and 2007 – a new type of immigration advocate has emerged: small-business owners.

Of course, some large U.S. businesses also rely on immigrant workers. And some employers are all too happy to take advantage of the broken immigration system – happy to hire unlawful workers, to pay them below-market wages, to exploit the fact that they can't bargain and aren't protected by the law.

But the lion's share of employers who depend on immigrants are small-business owners, known and trusted in their communities, who want nothing more than to be on the right side of the law.

After all, in most cases, they've invested their savings in their businesses, and they have brand names to protect, often their own family names. The last thing they want, or can afford, is to have all this snatched out from under them because they've run afoul of the law. They need a stable, reliable, legal workforce, and they're more than willing to pay for it.

Their message? They talk less about rights than about America's interests, less about compassion or ideals than about the U.S. economy and national security.

Sure, they speak in part from self-interest; they all have businesses to protect. But when it comes to immigration, their interests coincide with the interests of many American workers and of the U.S. economy.

Think about how a local economy works. If an employer has to shrink or close his business because he can't find immigrant workers, most often for the operation's lowest- or

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highest-skilled slots, he'll have to fire the Americans who fill the jobs in the middle of the skill ladder – the foreman at the dairy or packing plant, the maitre d' in the restaurant, the marketer at the IT startup. And when the restaurant chain shrinks or the biotech firm moves across the border to Canada, that means less work for American businesses up – and downstream in the economy – less work for other local businesses and fewer jobs for Americans.

Most employers who rely on immigrant workers are looking more to the future than the past. Of course, many hope that immigration reform will legalize their current workforce. But most are even more concerned about who will man their businesses in years ahead, as increased spending and pent-up demand power the way to economic recovery.

These small business owners need a way for the workers they count on to grow their businesses to enter the country legally. They want Congress to fix the system so we don't re-create the problem in years ahead. They know that the only way to control illegal immigration is to create a legal immigration system that works – and that this is the best way to secure our borders and restore the rule of law.

No one has more of a stake in fixing the broken immigration system than employers who rely on immigrant workers. And just because you won't see them on TV on Sunday doesn't mean they aren't making their voices heard.