

**Statement For The Record**  
**of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)**  
**For the**  
**Hearing on the Social Security Administration's Role in Verifying Employment Eligibility**  
**Before the**  
**Subcommittee on Social Security**  
**Committee on Ways and Means**  
  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

**April 14, 2011**

This statement is submitted on behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), urging all members of the Subcommittee on Social Security of the Committee on Ways and Means to oppose any legislation that would require all employers to use the E-Verify electronic employment verification system. A mandatory E-Verify program would place enormous additional responsibilities on the Social Security Administration; would cause hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizen workers and work-authorized immigrants to lose their jobs due to data errors; and cause our economy to suffer. Comprehensive immigration reform that includes an earned path to citizenship is the only realistic and humane approach to stopping unauthorized work.

**The Social Security Administration must focus its limited resources on its core mission of providing benefits to millions of seniors, people with disabilities and children.**

Each month, nearly 60 million Americans receive benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA). Eligibility determinations/redeterminations and benefits processing require millions of field office visits and phone contacts, and well as hundreds of thousands of full medical continuing disability reviews and hearings each year. With its current caseload, 30 percent of SSA's beneficiaries must wait more than 270 days. As of February 2011, SSA had 774,000 pending initial disability cases. Due to funding shortfalls, SSA discontinued service in over 300 remote service sites throughout the United States and may have to consolidate field offices. And, this does not take into account the nearly 80 million baby boomers who will soon be eligible for Social Security retirement benefits. Every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will turn 65 years old.

Expansion of E-Verify would place an enormous added burden on SSA. Currently, only 250,000 of the nation's 7.4 million employers have registered for E-Verify – or three percent. A mandatory program would require SSA to register and serve millions more employers than it does now. And, SSA would be faced with processing 50-60 million additional queries a year for new hires.

**E-Verify as it exists already experiences very high error rates which primarily affect U.S. citizen workers.**

Even with its small participation rate, E-Verify's database has a 4.1 percent error rate, resulting in 17.8 million discrepancies. The vast majority of these errors – 12.7 million – relate to native-born U.S. citizens. It is not surprising that workers who change their immigration status, marry, divorce, and/or have hyphenated surnames could falsely be accused of lacking authorization to work. Due to these technological and paperwork errors, millions of both incumbent and newly-hired workers have to go to an SSA field office to correct the mistake.

Another problem with the current system, which would be compounded by a mandatory E-Verify program, is a significant number of E-Verify inquiries result in erroneous “tentative nonconfirmation” notices. This means that the databases cannot immediately confirm that the employee is work-authorized. It is estimated that for every one million workers queried, 8,000 employees who are in fact work-authorized are informed they are not authorized to work. Further, it is estimated that in fiscal year 2010, 80,000 workers lost their jobs due to E-Verify. Under mandatory E-Verify, the Department of Homeland Security conservatively estimates that 1.2 million workers would have to visit a government agency or lose their job, and 770,000 would likely lose their jobs.

**E-Verify expansion does not create American jobs, and instead would cause unnecessary harm to our economy.**

While many in Congress assert that if we deport all undocumented workers U.S. citizens would move into these jobs, the job market is not so simple. Immigrants and native-born workers are not interchangeable. In reality, our economy is highly dependent on the low-wage, low-skill labor that undocumented workers provide. In the agriculture industry, most policymakers estimate that more than 75 percent of the labor force is undocumented. Deporting all undocumented workers – even assuming that would be possible – would be catastrophic for agriculture and our food supply.

The E-Verify program is having negative consequences on other aspects of our economy as well. In a time of mounting budget deficits, the federal government is spending \$23 billion on a program that is of dubious value at best. Besides mistakenly flagging workers who are in fact authorized to work in the U.S., it was unable to detect over half of undocumented workers in FY 2010. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the cost of implementing mandatory E-Verify would be \$3 billion in the first five years.

Moreover, most of the workers that E-Verify correctly identifies as undocumented are not leaving the country. Instead, they are going into the underground economy and no longer paying taxes. According to the CBO, implementation of a mandatory E-Verify program without fixing our broken immigration system will result in the loss of \$17 billion in tax revenue.

**Comprehensive immigration reform is the best course for U.S. workers, immigrants and our nation’s struggling economy.**

E-Verify is expensive and unworkable in its current form, and will become exponentially more so under a mandatory program. Our seniors, persons with disabilities and children will suffer even greater delays in receiving the benefits they so desperately need and deserve; millions more work-authorized employees will get caught in the net of system errors and our economy will suffer. Instead, AFSCME urges Congress to enact immigration legislation that builds on the economic contributions immigrants provide to our economy and offers an earned path to legalized status.