

Testimony of Ray Marshall
before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and Labor

June 7, 2007

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I appreciate your invitation to present my views on immigration reform, guest worker programs, and HR 1763.

I hold the Audre and Bernard Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. I have studied immigration for many years, had responsibility for immigrants and foreign worker matters in the Carter administration, and served on the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy and the Council on Foreign Relations advisory committee on immigration.

I have submitted a paper on immigration reform which makes the following points:

1. Because of the slowdown of our native work force growth, American economic growth for at least the next 20 years will depend heavily on immigration, which has contributed greatly to the vitality of the American economy.
2. Illegal immigration, however, subjects immigrants to grave dangers and exploitation; depresses wages of, and working conditions for, the most vulnerable American workers; undermines the rule of law; perpetuates marginal low-wage industries; and makes it hard to relate immigration to economic and social policies to achieve broadly shared prosperity.
3. The basic cause of illegal immigration is the magnetic relationship between desperate foreign workers and employers who prefer compliant foreign workers willing to accept lower wages and substandard working conditions.
4. Once illegal immigrant networks become institutionalized, a coherent, comprehensive array of policies will be required to reduce their size, including border and internal security; adjusting the status of unauthorized immigrants; and appropriate trade, investment, and aid policies with Mexico and other immigrant source countries.
5. For a number of reasons, a large new guest worker program is not a good idea:
 - a. These programs subject guest workers to exploitation and depress conditions for American workers.
 - b. There is no evidence that a large new guest worker program is necessary.
 - i. The adjustment of status for unauthorized immigrants will produce a large, but unknown, number of newly legalized workers.

- ii. We already have temporary worker programs, which should be improved to better meet the legitimate needs of employers, and to prevent the abuse of guest workers and the adulteration of American jobs. HR 1763 would be a necessary part of these reforms.
 - c. For non-temporary jobs, it would be better to admit workers as permanent residents with full employment and legal protections, including the right to earn citizenship. Although family unification should remain an important part of US immigration policy, we should give greater attention than we now do to education, skills, and work force experience.
- 6. Because of the continuing importance of immigration and temporary worker programs for the American economy and society, an independent entity should be created to generate high quality data, analyses, and estimates concerning the need for and impact of foreign workers on the American economy and work force. This entity should issue annual reports.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I would be glad to respond to questions.