

FORCED TO CHEAT

Posted by John Hinson on March 30, 2016



Marek Dallas Division President John Hinson wrote the following President's Message for AWC's Construction Dimensions magazine. Hinson is the 2015-2016 President of AWC.

A friend recently called me to vent about an audit by the Department of Homeland Security on his concrete business. Seeing me as an understanding ear, he related the impact this "enforcement action" was having on his seasoned craftsmen and their families.

His employees have worked for him for more than 30 years, but he admits some of them entered the country illegally in 1986 and should face punishment and fines. And what really bothers him is that he will be forced to terminate them. It is punishment to them, their families and his business that severely outweighs the crime.

Where is he going to find 40 loyal and available red, white and blue workers overnight to replace these trained craftsmen?

Years ago it was common to hire illegal immigrants. Employers did it unknowingly. They provided them training, health insurance, retirement plans, paid vacation time and insured their

safety, health and well-being all while withholding and paying their portion of taxes. Those employers offered their new employees an avenue to raise families and contribute to the economy and society.

Now the DHS audits result in employee terminations, forcing them into the shadows where neither they nor their new employers pay taxes. And they no longer have any insurance coverage.

What's wrong with this picture? How is it good for the worker, employer, our industry or our country?

These workers and their families, by the way, were well-established in their adopted homeland and not about to move across the border just because of their pink slips. And the government can't deport them unless they are convicted of a felony. That's not in these workers' makeup. They will remain in the industry, flying below the radar, working for contractors that violate the laws. Now these workers continue to be illegal immigrants—and, they are forced to violate our income tax and labor laws. Forced to cheat.

My friend asked me a simple question: "Why can't we work these guys with strings attached? If there are no available legal craftsmen, why not create an avenue to hire and employ able-bodied workers who meet legal obligations, allowing them to contribute to the economy and society for the benefit of all parties? Geez, is it really too hard for our legislators to figure this out?"

My response: "Those are really good questions."

On a positive note, join me next month in New Orleans for AWCI's Convention & INTEX Expo . Find me and we can talk about this over some jambalaya.

Tags:

immigration reform
