

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Modernize Immigration to Strengthen America's Restaurant Workforce.

UNDERSTANDING

THE BACKGROUND

Immigration is essential to a resilient, economically viable restaurant industry. **In 2025, operators needed to fill nearly 900,000 open jobs each month, and staffing remained one of their top challenges.** With the U.S. labor force projected to grow by less than 4% over the next decade while restaurants add 1.7 million jobs, the industry faces a persistent structural labor gap.

Restaurants are the nation's second-largest private employer, supporting 15.7 million employees across 1 million locations and generating \$1.4 trillion in annual sales and \$3.5 trillion in total economic impact. Without immigration reform, operators may be forced to reduce hours, delay growth, or scale back service—impacting small businesses, local tax bases, and supply chains nationwide.

Why This Issue Matters to Restaurant Operators

A stable and adequately sized workforce is the backbone of restaurant operations. **Comprehensive immigration reform enables operators to fill open roles, retain experienced team members, and plan for growth with confidence.** By aligning policy with real-world labor needs, reform helps restaurants maintain service levels, sustain community jobs, and support local economies. Immigrants are already part the industry at every level and a modern system is needed to match that reality: nearly 1 in 4 restaurant workers was born outside the U.S., underscoring how central immigration is to the sector's long-term health.

Our Three-Part Solution

To address the workforce challenges facing restaurant operators and strengthen the long-term stability of the industry, comprehensive immigration reform must be built around three core principles:

1. Protect the current workforce

Provide stability for long-serving employees, including Dreamers and individuals with Temporary Protected Status, so restaurants can retain experienced workers who have contributed to their businesses and communities for years.

2. Fix the work-visa system

Create new visa pathways for year-round, non-agricultural roles and streamline existing programs so operators can meet persistent labor needs in a timely, predictable way.

3. Build a modern immigration system for the future

Align immigration laws with future labor market realities to ensure restaurants have access to a consistent, legal workforce that supports growth, service quality, and consumer demand.



AMERICA'S RESTAURANT OWNERS

SMALL BUSINESSES NEED SUPPORT

Without reform, operators will continue to face chronic staffing shortfalls that limit hours, stall expansion, and reduce service—directly impacting small businesses and the broader supply chain. In an industry that is intensely people-powered, failing to modernize immigration diminishes economic output and undermines the guest experience.

Every year of inaction compounds the problem. With ~150,000 new restaurant and foodservice jobs projected in 2026, **modernizing immigration is not just policy—it's an economic imperative to sustain growth, support communities, and enhance the dining experience nationwide.**



**SCAN TO GET
MORE INFORMATION**

Restaurants Fuel America's Economy

- With nearly 900,000 monthly job openings in 2025 labor needs exceed available workers.
- Restaurants are projected to add 1.7 million jobs in the coming decade, while the U.S. labor force grows less than 4%.

