



United States Labor Summit

Chair Letter

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to the U.S. Labor Summit at CNYMUN 2024! More than ever in times of uncertainty it is crucial to address the enduring and prevalent issues of workers rights. We are excited to facilitate diplomatic collaboration from a variety of delegations to benefit America's workforce during the conference. Your chairs for this conference will be James Cao and Ritvik Mehta.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

James Cao is a senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School and is excited to chair at CNYMUN this year. In school, he is the co-president of both FM Fishing Club and FM Fresh Meals. Outside of school, he devotes much of his time to swimming, but also loves to binge-watch shows and listen to music. James is looking forward to meeting this year's delegates at the conference!

Ritvik is a Senior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. Outside of MUN, he's involved in the school's Science Olympiad team and Investment Club. He also enjoys playing tennis, playing the violin, and singing. He is determined to provide a thorough and enjoyable MUN experience and can be contacted anytime with your questions and concerns.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

Your topics for the United States Labor Summit at CNYMUN 2025 will be:

1. Unfair Working Conditions (WIP)
2. The Immigrant Workforce

Founded in June 2021, the U.S. Labor Summit is a national summit hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor. The conference brings a multitude of organizations together to discuss issues and solutions in the labor market. In committee, rather than submitting a typical resolution, delegates will discuss which subtopics they feel are most important and will create a resolution that would include: agreements/commitments by corporations to secure some form of labor rights, recommendations to the U.S. government to support/legislate a policy, etc.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

Following CNYMUN tradition, the debate will be conducted in Harvard style, meaning delegates will

not be allowed to use pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards.

To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a 1-2 page position paper via email that addresses both topics before the start of the conference. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation, and display an understanding of the topics, demonstrating research and knowledge of your organization's goals. When deciding on awards, the chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort towards research/preparation, collaborate with other delegates during committee sessions, stay within their nation's policies, and get their voice heard without being overbearing.

Furthermore, for the first time, CNYMUN is implementing a tiered structure of committees to ensure similar experience levels for all committee members. The U.S. Labor Summit is designated as an advanced committee, and we would like the debate to reflect that. In turn, the 'Best New Delegate' award will not be offered to any delegates in this committee.

Please share position papers before the conference begins. On top of this, this committee will also feature Head to Head debate as an available motion and will most likely feature a mini-crisis. Procedure for both can be found on www.cnymun.org. To contact your chairs about any research, position papers, committee inquiries, or other questions, our emails are listed below. We also encourage you to scan our lengthy delegate preparation resources – and award structure – on www.cnymun.org. We wish you luck, and look forward to what CNYMUN 2025 will bring!

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TOPIC 1: REDUCING UNETHICAL LABOR STANDARDS AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Unfair working conditions have plagued workplaces across America since its beginning. Elements such as overtime hours, abusive treatment, or low pay, have contributed to what could best be described as “wage slavery”, the exploitation of people who live entirely dependent on their income to sustain their livelihoods. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, Employees working in excess of 40 hours in one work-week must receive an overtime pay rate at least one and one-half times their regular wage.¹ However, with no limit on the number of hours that persons over the age of 16 can work, demanding organizations do not consider the impacts of their work on their employees.

HISTORY

To fully understand the longevity of the issue, it is vital to be aware of past abuses that prompted the several laws that protect (or fail to protect) our workers. Most workplace abuses known today stemmed from the practices of large corporations during the Second Industrial Revolution. Following the Civil War, the United States entered a period of rapid urbanization resulting from an increased demand for labor in factories.² Consequently, people poured into the cities with many jobs from their rural settlements in search of more profitable opportunities. However, once these jobs filled up, many people were left without a source of income in cities where they had to pay a considerable amount to sustain themselves, thus leading to employers having access to cheaper labor.³ As a result, this desperation would lead to these jobless people taking up blue-collar jobs, thus leading to these employers profiting from cheap labor. The by-products of this were harsh working conditions imposed upon workers desperate for income, regardless of what they would have to suffer, and rapidly declining standards for wages and healthy working conditions.

¹“Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act.” *US. Department of Labor*, www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa.

² Yuko, Elizabeth. “How the Industrial Revolution Fueled the Growth of Cities.” *History*, A&E Television Networks, 4 Oct. 2023, www.history.com/news/industrial-revolution-cities.

³ “America at Work.” *America at Work, America at Leisure: Motion Pictures from 1894 to 1915*. *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/collections/america-at-work-and-leisure-1894-to-1915/articles-and-essays/america-at-work/.

Some of the workplace abuses that became commonplace were 12-16 hour shifts, deadly accidents due to lack of safety equipment, and unsanitary conditions, which heightened the chances of catching illnesses.⁴ Additionally, wage slavery would also apply to children. Another severe issue of the Industrial Revolution was children working to support themselves and their families however, at the time, there were no regulations to protect children from the cruel conditions, and in turn, there would be many who suffered from stunted growth, diseases, and even life-lasting injuries that came from their work.

Due to a lack of regulations and policies surrounding labor, employers could act without any threat from the government. However, this did not mean people would sit quietly and let their employers do as they pleased. Strikes became a common form of protest against unjust employers, and although they were often short and unsuccessful, sometimes they yielded better conditions for workers as companies faced losses and wanted to settle quickly.⁵ Between the years 1881 and 1905, 37,000 strikes were organized to deal with unfair working conditions and bring about reform in their respective companies. The unions that organized these strikes, such as the National Labor Union and the American Federation of Labor, were the first symbols of hope for workers subjected to malicious practices. However, it is essential to note that women and African Americans did not always receive the same value of membership as white men did. One setback that prevented unions from making any significant progress was the Sherman Anti-trust Act being used against trade unions.⁶

Policies regarding labor came into consideration at the beginning of the 1900s, when the National Child Labor Committee was established to assess the safety

⁴ Beck, Elias. “Working Conditions in the Industrial Revolution.” *History Crunch*, 26 Nov. 2016, www.historycrunch.com/working-conditions-in-the-industrial-revolution.html#.

⁵ “Early Strikes and Labor Unions.” *Students of History*, www.studentsofhistory.com/strikes-labor-unions.

⁶ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Sherman Antitrust Act”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5 Aug. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sherman-Antitrust-Act>.

of children in the workforce.⁷ In 1916, the Keating–Owen Child Labor Act was passed, which banned the sale of any products produced with the labor of any child under the age of 14. This provoked the government to pay greater attention to the circumstances that workers face daily in their companies. As a result, the National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935, which protected workplace democracy by allowing employees safe access to representation. The other most crucial law that was passed was the Fair Labor Standards Act, which governs most of the protections that are provided to employees across the country.⁸ In its beginnings, the law didn't protect workers in Agricultural or Domestic work, and neither did it prevent bias based on ethnicity or gender in the workplaces of America.⁹ Even though it has given these protections to those groups now, enforcing the aforementioned is not guaranteed and thus leads to toxic attitudes within companies. To deal with this, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to prevent discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.¹⁰

MINIMUM WAGE

Although working conditions may differ significantly from those Americans experienced during the Industrial Revolution, there is still a long way to go to achieve a genuinely fair corporate America. The issue regarding wages lies in the fact that the Federal Minimum Wage of \$7.25 is not enough for workers to sustain a household and is worth nearly 30% less than when it was raised 14 years ago.¹¹ This effectively forces workers to turn to polyworking, which thus causes many forms of harassment to

ensue. Employers can use intimidation, harassment, and even the threat or act of physical violence to compel their workers to toil longer hours. These employees are also vulnerable to wage theft, in which employers don't pay overtime and erase time cards.¹² Additionally, the debate surrounding tips also has considerable externalities since employers may pay workers below minimum wage at a limit of \$2.13 an hour with credit for tips that often do not reach the federal wage requirement. Although employers must make up the difference, this leaves the underlying issues of customer dependency and employer and worker morale to be addressed. All of these issues often come at the expense of the workers who are not given enough protection by labor laws and succumb to financial instability and typically poor mental health.

Addressing these issues is vital to financially backing many people in the United States, but it should be done carefully. Raising the minimum wage impacts workers earning that amount and anyone making a near-minimum wage. An increase in minimum wage could raise the salaries of around 40 million workers, which is nearly 25% of the workforce of the United States.¹³ This could also lift around 400,000 workers above the poverty line but may cause 700,000 people to lose their jobs.¹⁴ Some may argue that the impacts of a raise in the minimum wage on small businesses are harmful; however, research shows that it would be better for employee retainment and productivity.¹⁵ Granted that small businesses will have a harder time absorbing the costs of this increase in salary than large corporations, some tactics they could use would

⁷ Graham Boone, "Labor law highlights, 1915–2015," *Monthly Labor Review*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 2015, <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2015.38>

⁸ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Fair Labor Standards Act." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2 May. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/money/Fair-Labor-Standards-Act>.

⁹ Mast, Nina. "Youth subminimum wages and why they should be eliminated." *Working Economics Blog*, Economic Policy Institute, 8 Jan. 2024, www.epi.org/blog/youth-subminimum-wages/.

¹⁰ "Protections Against Discrimination and Other Prohibited Practices." *Federal Trade Commission*, www.ftc.gov/policy-notices/no-fear-act/protections-against-discrimination.

¹¹ Payne-Patterson, Jasmine, and Adewale A. Maye. "A history of the federal minimum wage; 85 years later, the minimum wage is far from equitable." *Working Economics Blog*, Economic Policy Institute, 31 Aug. 2023, www.epi.org/blog/a-history-of-the-federal-minimum-wage-85-years-later-the-minimum-wage-is-far-from-equitable/.

¹² Bloomenthal, Andrew. "Can a Family Survive on the U.S. Minimum Wage?" Investopedia, 2 Jan. 2024, www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/022615/can-family-survive-us-minimum-wage.asp#:~:text=Minimum%20wage%20employees%20are%20also,through%20lengthy%20security%20bag%20checks.

¹³ Khattar, Rose, et al. "Raising the Minimum Wage Would Be an Investment in Growing the Middle Class." *Center for American Progress*, 20 July 2023, www.americanprogress.org/article/raising-the-minimum-wage-would-be-an-investment-in-growing-the-middle-class/.

¹⁴ Maurer, Roy. "Minimum Wage Proposal Would Reduce Poverty but Cost Jobs, CBO Says." *Society for Human Resource Management*, 23 Jan. 2024, www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/minimum-wage-proposal-cost-jobs-cbo-says#:~:text=The%20higher%20federal%20minimum%20wage,a%20reduction%20of%20500%2C000%20workers.

¹⁵ Uzialko, Adam. "How Small Businesses Are Affected by Minimum Wage." *Business News Daily*, 20 Nov. 2023, www.businessnewsdaily.com/8984-increased-minimum-wage.html.

include cutting business expenses, increasing prices, and reducing hours.

TIME-OFF

Another critical issue in the United States is time off in the forms of maternity leave, FMLA, or paid time off. Being the only wealthy country in the world without a national program for paid parental leave, the United States has significantly lower standards than other member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.¹⁶ The only federal law that women have in place for protection is the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which only guarantees your job for up to 12 weeks after childbirth or adoption, and that too without providing pay during that time off.¹⁷ This is compared to the bulk of OECD countries, which offer an average of 18 weeks of paid maternity leave.¹⁸ The average time off for the partner in these countries is 2-3 weeks, which is comparatively a lot considering that the U.S. doesn't provide any leave for them.

Paid parental leave isn't the only issue with time off from work, as the state of paid time off carries several externalities. Despite the 87% of employees in the private sector that have access to some paid personal leave, nearly 50% of the lowest 10% of earners lack this commodity, and neither do almost 40% of part-time workers.¹⁹ Another underlying issue is the culture of workplaces across America since employees don't necessarily use their paid time off (PTO) or aren't entirely away from work even during their vacation. Nearly 90% of employees mention that they check emails from their bosses during PTO, and almost 60% said that they took work-related

¹⁶ Dreher, Morgan. "The US Takes Last Place: The Problem of Paid Parental Leave." *Northwestern Undergraduate Law Journal*, www.thenulj.com/nuljforum/the-us-takes-last-place-the-problem-of-paid-parental-leave.

¹⁷ Green, Alison. "Everything You Need to Know About Maternity Leave in the U.S." *The Cut*, 14 May 2024, www.thecut.com/article/maternity-leave-usa.html.

¹⁸ Fluchtmann, Jonas. "Supporting equal parenting: Paid parental leave." *OECD iLibrary*, OECD, www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/67d48024-en/1/3/23/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/67d48024-en&_csp_=cf1b2c60a6e37adbf8a9ecf7b480f228&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#:~:text=Across%20the%20OECD%2C%20statutory%20rights,paid%20maternity%20leave%2C%20though%20a.

¹⁹ Williamson, Molly Weston. "The State of Paid Time Off in the U.S. in 2024." *Center for American Progress*, 17 Jan. 2024, www.americanprogress.org/article/the-state-of-paid-time-off-in-the-u-s-in-2024/.

calls.²⁰ This is detrimental to workers' mental health and morale and can impact their productivity. Additionally, 46% of workers say that they take less time than offered, and of those who earn an upper-class income, 50% resonated with this.²¹

SAFETY & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

A report from 2015 showcases that ½ of working Americans have experienced unpleasant and potentially hazardous working conditions, demonstrating that the policies in place today still aren't enough to protect the workforce entirely.²² An instance of this is blue-collar workers who perform physically draining tasks. They often report working for low wages that aren't enough to cover necessities, let alone be proportional to the required effort.²³ Another issue that they face is a lack of access to proper benefits such as health insurance, as shown by their lower participation in healthcare services.²⁴ This is especially concerning, considering these workers face more grueling and dangerous jobs than white-collar workers. Large Corporations also play a significant role in today's unfair working conditions. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently cited six Amazon warehouses for failing to prevent ergonomic hazards for their employees.²⁵ The result of these practices was a high rate of musculoskeletal disorders, which usually stem from

²⁰ Mayer, Kathryn. "Employers' PTO Problem: Employees Working on Vacation." *Society of Human Resource Management*, 2 July 2024, www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/benefits-compensation/employers--pto-problem--employees-working-on-vacation.

²¹ Dinesh, Shradha, and Kim Parker. "More than 4 in 10 U.S. workers don't take all their paid time off." *Pew Research Center*, 10 Aug. 2023, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/10/more-than-4-in-10-u-s-workers-dont-take-all-their-paid-time-off/.

²² Maestas, Nicole, Kathleen J. Mullen, David Powell, Till von Wachter, and Jeffrey B. Wenger. *Working Conditions in the United States: Results of the 2015 American Working Conditions Survey*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2014.html.

²³ Jones, Salvador A. "Exploitation of Blue Collar Workers: A Deep Dive into the Silent Epidemic." *Medium*, 11 Mar. 2024, medium.com/@elisafigueroaeuj/exploitation-of-blue-collar-worker-s-a-deep-dive-into-the-silent-epidemic-c9917d04b2e8.

²⁴ Damen, Marc A W et al. "Factors associated with blue-collar workers' participation in Worksite Health Promotion Programs: a scoping literature review." *Health promotion international* vol. 38,3 (2023): daad052. doi:10.1093/heapro/daad052

²⁵ "US Department of Labor finds Amazon exposed workers to unsafe conditions, ergonomic hazards at three more warehouses in Colorado, Idaho, New York." *OSHA National News Release*, 1 Feb. 2023. *Occupational Safety and Health Administration*, www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/national/02012023.

the frequency with which employees strain themselves to fulfill tasks.

Discrimination in the workplace persists even today despite the existence of organizations such as the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. Laws such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 claim to protect the wages and opportunities of prospective employees, and yet disparities still exist.²⁶ The median weekly earnings for Black workers ages 16 and older are \$878 compared to \$1,059 for the rest of U.S. workers.²⁷ Similarly, women face a job gap rate of 15%, which is significantly higher than men's rate of 10.5%, which showcases that women are less likely to be readily accepted for a given job.²⁸ Additionally, older women experience more age discrimination in hiring than men do, with a callback rate for older men being smaller than the 36% rate difference between young and old women.²⁹

Given these conditions in the United States, members of society who hold the power to influence labor laws in the U.S. must convene to discuss how to improve conditions for employees. Delegates should take on their roles adhere to the policies of the person they are representing, and display the proper interests of their respective committee member, as this will balance the opinions of the committee and lead to fair resolutions.

²⁶ "Protections Against Discrimination and Other Prohibited Practices." *Federal Trade Commission*, www.ftc.gov/policy-notices/no-fear-act/protections-against-discrimination.

²⁷ Schaeffer, Katherine. "Black workers' views and experiences in the U.S. labor force stand out in key ways." *Pew Research Center*, 31 Aug. 2023, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/31/black-workers-view-and-experiences-in-the-us-labor-force-stand-out-in-key-ways/.

²⁸ *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. 20 June 2023. *World Economic Forum*, www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/in-full/gender-gaps-in-the-workforce

²⁹ "Is there age discrimination in hiring?" *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, Apr. 2017, www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2017/beyond-bls/is-there-age-discrimination-in-hiring.htm.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How can existing policies have more coverage regarding their protections for workers?
2. What actions can be taken to deal with employees' unfair conditions now?
3. How can any new or existing policies be made more appealing to businesses?
4. How can conditions be better documented and workers better represented?
5. How can laws be better enforced upon companies that refuse to follow them?

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

"Unfair Labor Practice"

<https://www.flra.gov/cases/unfair-labor-practice>
[Unfair labor practices](#)

"Workplace Violence - Risk Factors"

<https://www.osha.gov/workplace-violence/risk-factors>

"Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act"

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa>

"12 Types of Paid and Unpaid Leave and Time Off"

<https://workology.com/employee-paid-and-unpaid-time-off/>

"The State of Paid Time Off in the U.S. in 2024"

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-state-of-paid-time-off-in-the-u-s-in-2024/>

TOPIC 2: ADDRESSING THE USAGE OF IMMIGRANT LABOR IN INDUSTRIES

Since the 20th century, immigrants have been a pivotal part of the American workforce. Today various issues with the immigrant workforce have emerged as many organizations face problems with exploitation and undocumented immigrants. The immigrant workforce is needed in many sectors of the economy for the reason that they are willing to work in low-wage positions that domestic workers refuse to take. However, this has made them vulnerable to being exploited in one way or the other because many of the immigrants get exposed to dangerous working conditions, wage theft, and other vices perpetrated by employers with bad intentions.³⁰ Furthermore, undocumented immigrants are faced with a more perilous situation than documented ones as they are threatened with deportation.

The problems of the immigrants in the labor market of the USA in the present day are rooted in the historical experience of exploitation, marginalization and economic dependence on immigrants' work. Immigrant workers have thus been indispensable to the US economy since the arrival of European immigrants during the Industrial Revolution where they populated factories and railroads or the mid-1900s Bracero Program that brought millions of Mexican farm workers under conditions of virtual servitude.³¹ Increased undocumented immigration in the last decade of the twentieth century due to economic crises in Latin American countries and lack of possibilities to immigrate legally strengthened the position of the immigrant workers as a needed but exploited population. Due to this historical dependence on migrant workers and more recent trends including policies that restrict immigration – Title Public Health Order, Asylum Transit Ban, Migration Protection protocol – and increased anti-immigrant sentiment, the modern migrant worker is fighting for a decent living and assimilation in

³⁰ Report. *Labor Day 2019 | Employers Increase Their Profits and Put Downward Pressure on Wages and Labor Standards by Exploiting Migrant Workers*. Economic Policy Institute, 27 Aug. 2019, <https://www.epi.org/publication/labor-day-2019-immigration-policy/>.

³¹ The Bracero Program. (n.d.). https://www.unco.edu/colorado-oral-history-migratory-labor-project/pdf/Bracero_Program_PowerPoint.pdf

society that for a long time has reaped from their effort while denying them their rights.

A large number of immigrants, especially those with no legal status or holding temporary work permits, are employed in low paying jobs with adverse working conditions and are therefore easily exploited. A report from the Economic Policy Institute has it that immigrants take 24% of the low-wage jobs in the United States even though they only constitute 17% of the labor force.³² These workers often suffer wage theft, hazardous working conditions, and inadequate rights to benefits such as health care or paid sick days.³³ Nearly one in three noncitizen workers make below 200% of the federal poverty level and more than 30% are uninsured; this is three times higher than the uninsured rate among U.S. born citizens.³⁴ This exploitation is most evident in industries like agriculture and construction where more than half of the workers are immigrants. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor identified that 78% of the wage and hour violations reported in 2022 were in the areas of work with higher immigrant populations.³⁵ Discrimination exacerbates these difficulties, as Latin American, African, and Asian immigrants in particular often face profiling, harassment, and unfair treatment in their workplaces and beyond. The Pew Research Center conducted a survey and found out that 58% of the Hispanic adults in the U.S. have experienced discrimination or bias at some point in their lives due to their race or color.³⁶ Not only does this discrimination have negative impacts on their

³² Press Releases. *Wage Theft Costs American Workers as Much as \$50 Billion a Year*. Economic Policy Institute, 11 Sept. 2014, <https://www.epi.org/press/wage-theft-costs-american-workers-50-billion/>.

³³ Deepali Lal. *American Agriculture's Dependence on Immigrant Workers - The Arkansas Journal of Social Change and Public Service - UA Little Rock*. The Arkansas Journal of Social Change and Public Service, 29 Mar. 2021, <https://ualr.edu/socialchange/2021/03/28/american-agricultures-dependence-on-immigrant-workers/>.

³⁴ *Employment Among Immigrants and Implications for Health and Health Care* | KFF. KFF, 6 Nov. 2023, <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/employment-among-immigrants-and-implications-for-health-and-health-care/>.

³⁵ Jeffrey S. Passel. *Size of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Workforce Stable After the Great Recession*. Pew Research Center, 14 Apr. 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2016/11/03/size-of-u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-workforce-stable-after-the-great-recession/>.

psychological health but also on their ability to attain better-paying jobs.

Many immigrants do not speak English, and learning a new language may be a very daunting task to many. Inability to speak English without an accent is a disadvantage because it causes misunderstandings; people with such features are discriminated against, socially marginalized, and have limited job opportunities. It has been established that language plays a critical role in accessing services, employment, and social inclusion. For instance, language barriers can limit the ability of immigrants to seek medical care, legal assistance, or education.

The difficulties that immigrants experience in the U.S. are further compounded by the general trends in immigration policies, which have been tightening in the recent past. For instance, the number of refugees admitted to the U. S. in the year 2021 was as low as 11,411 while the average admittance rate was 95, 000 per year before 2017.³⁷ In the same way, the number of H-1B visas for high-skilled workers has also been cut down, which has led to a scarcity of workers especially in technology and health sectors. The H-1B visa program allows U.S. companies to bring in temporary foreign workers to fill skilled positions in areas where shortages are common: Technology, healthcare, and engineering. The program helps solve important wage gaps in skill sets that enable companies to avoid delays and promote innovation. However, it also generates debate about wage suppression – some foreign workers are hired at lower wages, perhaps displacing native born workers, especially in entry-level STEM jobs. Others may argue that the program conversely boosts economic growth and produces more jobs.³⁸

Another factor that has affected the industries that rely on seasonal or temporary workers is the policies that have been put in place to reduce legal and illegal immigration. For instance, the agricultural industry,

³⁷ USAFacts. *How Many Refugees Are Entering the US?* USAFacts, 1 Aug. 2024, <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-refugees-are-entering-the-us/>.

³⁸ *The H-1B visa program and its impact on the U.S. economy.* American Immigration Council. (2024, October 9). <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/h1b-visa-program-fact-sheet>

which relies on immigrant employees for 73% of the workers, has suffered from staffing deficiencies because of H-2A and H-2B Visas constraints. Some immigrants have no legal rights and access to humanitarian protections due to the changes in the asylum laws that have limited eligibility and the elimination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for some countries.

One policy that has been detrimental to immigrants is the Public Charge rule. The Public Charge rule is part of the U.S. immigration law and has undergone a number of changes over the years. The Public Charge rule specifically is a test that determines an immigrant's likelihood of being dependent on the government for legal aid, economic opportunities, education, and healthcare access. Originally designed to prevent people who might become public burdens from receiving benefits, its definition was significantly broadened in 2019 under the Trump administration to include more non-cash benefits and such factors as education and English proficiency.³⁹ This expansion produced new anxieties among immigrants, who feared that utilizing public benefits might harm their immigration status, thus, leading to negative health and economic consequences.⁴⁰ The Biden administration has since endeavored to reverse these modifications, returning to the definition of a stricter sense, one which includes only cash benefits and extended care in an institution. The rule has evolved since the 1920s as a part of the changes in the immigration policies and social beliefs and is still the subject of legal controversies and policies. Supporters claim that it protects the public funds and guarantees people's contributions to the economy while opponents state that it discriminates against poor immigrants and violates the idea of sheltering people and offering them opportunities.

In the U.S. Labor Summit, different organizations will take stances representing the issues affecting the immigrant workforce in the United States. To some extent, delegates may advance previous measures by

³⁹ *Public Charge | USCIS.* USCIS, 19 Dec. 2022, <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/public-charge-0>.

⁴⁰ *Public Charge.* ca.gov, 31 Aug. 2024, <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/refugees/public-charge>.

focusing on the policies of the legalization of immigrants, safety of the border as well as the rights of immigrants, legal means of reporting labor abuses, legal assistance and education and collaboration with the union, immigrants' rights organizations and business. The result of the summit will be important in determining the future of Immigrant labor in the U. S. and the impact on immigrant laborers and the economy at large.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What impact do recent immigration policies, such as reduced refugee admissions and H-1B visas, have on the U.S. workforce and specific industries?
2. What specific policy changes are needed to improve labor rights and protections for immigrant workers?
3. How can the U.S. balance the need for immigrant labor with ensuring fair and humane working conditions?
4. What strategies can be employed to address the language barriers and educational challenges faced by immigrant workers?

HELPFUL RESOURCES

1. "Barriers to career advancement"
Ballardbrief.byu.edu
2. "Employment landscape"
kff.org
3. "Immigration policy"
americanimmigrationcouncil.org