



Economic Impact Study Highlights Foreign-Born Workforce Contributions in Idaho Economy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 13, 2026

BOISE, Idaho – Today, the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, the Idaho Dairymen's Association, Ahlquist, the Idaho Home Builders Association, along with other members of the [Idaho Alliance for a Legal Workforce](#) hosted a press conference releasing the findings of a new economic impact study titled *The Story of Idaho Labor Markets: An Economic Analysis of Foreign-Born Contributions*.

The study, prepared by regional economists Steven Peterson, MS., and Timothy Nadreau, PhD., analyzes the economic contributions of foreign-born workers across key sectors of Idaho's economy including agriculture, construction, and hospitality and dining services. It also outlines the projected impacts to gross regional product, household income, and jobs if a portion of the unauthorized foreign-born workforce were removed.

According to the study, removing 28,725 foreign-born workers would result in a 4.6% decline in Idaho's gross state product, totaling \$5.1 billion. These impacts would extend beyond the listed economic sectors and would be felt by U.S.-born Idaho residents, with an estimated loss of 55,818 jobs statewide when supply chain effects are included, equivalent to 4.7% of total state employment. Idahoans would experience a \$2.9 billion reduction in wages and benefits, while declines in industry output would lead to a \$397.8 million in lost state tax revenues.¹

¹Peterson, S & Nadreau, T (February 2026). *The Story of Idaho Labor Markets: An Economic Analysis of Foreign-Born Labor*. Idaho Alliance for a Legal Workforce. <https://idaholegalworkforce.org/economic-analysis-feb-2026>

“This analysis provides valuable, data-driven insight into the role foreign-born workers play in sustaining Idaho’s economy and the potential consequences of their removal,” said Zak Miller, CEO of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. “As immigration policy continues to be debated, it’s critical that decisions are informed by economic data. This study helps illustrate what is at stake for farmers, workers, and the broader Idaho economy.”

Losses of this magnitude are comparable to those Idaho experienced during the Great Recession of 2007-2009. The report notes that Idaho’s ability to recover and move back to baseline growth in the absence of its current labor mix would determine both the duration and ultimate depth of the ensuing economic recession.¹

Rick Naerebout, CEO of the Idaho Dairymen’s Association said, “Idaho dairy producers have spent years advocating for legal and reliable workforce policies, knowing that immigration can only be addressed at the federal level. This study shows that without federal solutions, Idaho’s economy will continue to face unnecessary strain. In the meantime, we need to make sure that state policymakers don’t make conditions worse in Idaho for our workforce.”

Those concerns were echoed by leaders in Idaho’s construction and housing industries, who noted that while border security is important, the state’s economy and housing supply also depend on a stable, legal workforce.

“This report proves that Idaho’s economy depends on a strong and stable workforce,” said Steve Matinez, President of the Idaho Home Builders Association “This doesn’t have to be an either-or conversation. We can support a secure border while also pursuing federal solutions that provide the workforce needed to build homes and support Idaho’s economy.”

Tommy Ahlquist, CEO of Ahlquist, said, “Republicans support border security and public safety, not top-down government mandates. What we don’t need is more red tape, as this study shows, making it harder to maintain a stable workforce in industries like mine while driving up the cost of living and hurting working families. Let’s give President Trump the space he needs to solve the workforce problem and stay away from government red tape policies like e-verify.”

The study was discussed during a panel that included Tommy Ahlquist, CEO and President of Ahlquist; Rick Naerebout, CEO of the Idaho Dairymen’s Association; Zak Miller, CEO of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation; and Steve Martinez of the Idaho Home Builders Association, and one study author Dr. Timothy Nadreau.

¹Peterson, S & Nadreau, T (February 2026). The Story of Idaho Labor Markets: An Economic Analysis of Foreign-Born Labor. Idaho Alliance for a Legal Workforce. <https://idaholegalworkforce.org/economic-analysis-feb-2026>

The panel participants and members of the broader Idaho Alliance for a Legal Workforce emphasized the impacts this study uncovered and urged policymakers, stakeholders, and the public to consider the study's findings as discussions around immigration and workforce policy continue.

The full economic impact study is available at:

<https://idaholegalworkforce.org/economic-analysis-feb-2026>



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