

## What is E-Verify?

E-Verify is an employment eligibility verification program enacted as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996.

## How the Program Works

Participating employers access Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) databases to input social security and alien work authorization numbers to determine whether they are valid.

The program helps discourage applicants for employment who are unauthorized to work and screens out applicants that provide social security numbers and/or alien employment authorization documents that are not valid. It is an effective deterrent against illegal immigration because it reduces the ability of undocumented workers to gain employment in the U.S.

E-Verify provides for the electronic and/or telephonic verification of employment authorization documents provided by new hires for employment to an employer at the time of hire.

## Importance to Meat and Poultry Industry

As an industry that relies upon the contributions of more than a half-million employees – including immigrant labor – the meat and poultry industry needs an immigration policy that protects our nation's security, establishes rational and practicable employment laws, and encourages a legal, reliable, and productive workforce.

To that end and since 1997, the meat and poultry industry has been the leading industry user of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) Basic Pilot Employment Verification program (now known as E-Verify) which electronically verifies newly hired employee I-9 information through the SSA and the

USCIS databases. AMI has strongly supported past efforts by Congress to reauthorize the program and AMI was at the forefront advocating expansion of the program to all 50 states after its initial introduction as a pilot program.

## Areas for Improvement

E-Verify is not a panacea and problems with the system persist. There is currently no fool-proof method to tie a person's name and social security number to that person. Another option to securely tie a person to the documents being presented, the federal government needs to develop biometric identifiers that will further secure the workplace and decrease the rate of identity theft. These identifiers will tie a person's retinal scan or fingerprint to their identification therefore enhancing an employer's ability to only hire authorized workers. To address identity theft, the number of documents allowed to be processed for hire should be reduced from the current list of 24 documents to six.

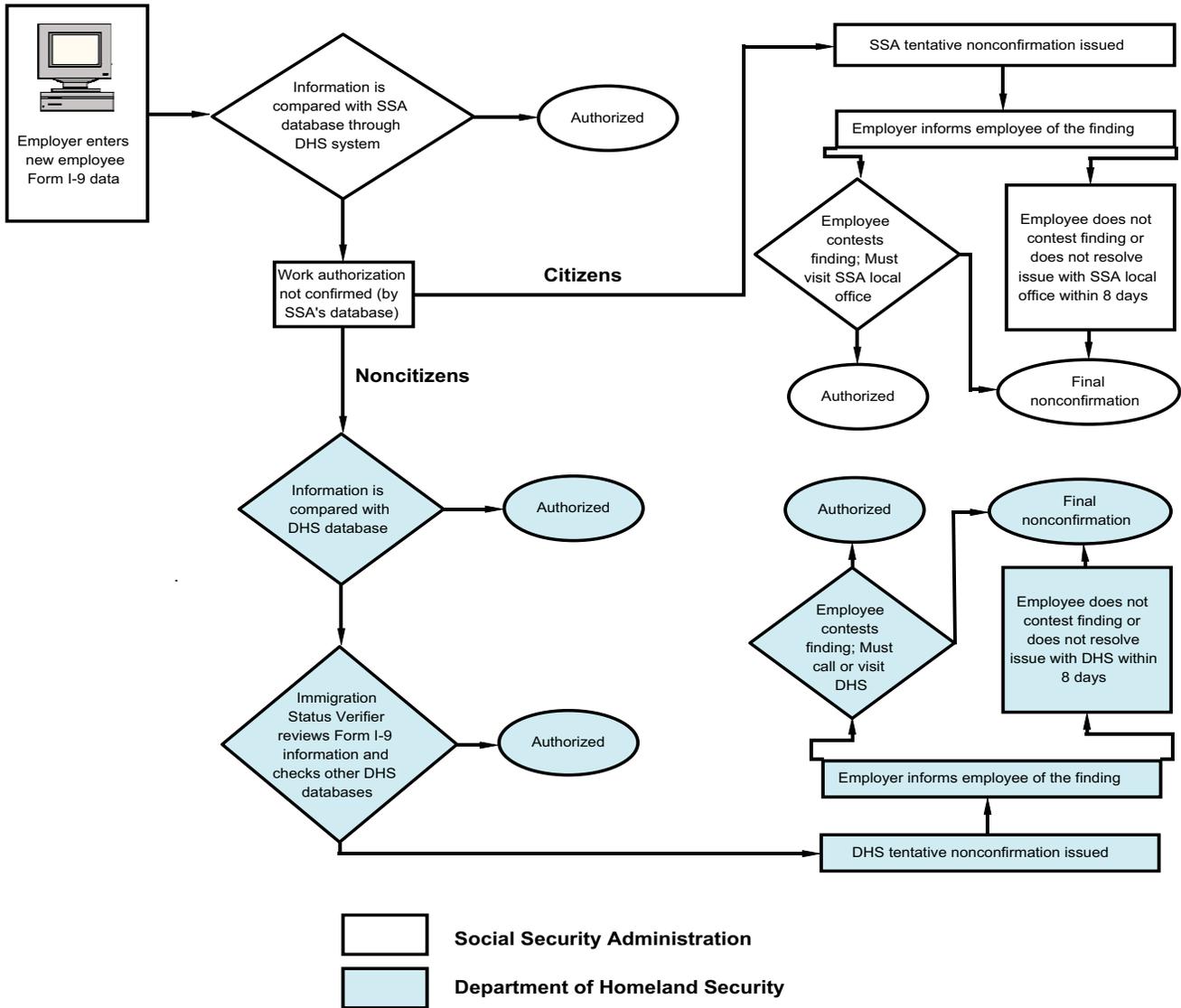
In addition, the program has only recently become nationally-available and currently, the program is voluntary for employers.

## AMI Position

To be effective, the program needs to be mandatory. This could be achieved by implementing the following steps:

1. A seven year phase in by size of company
2. Reduction in the number of documents that can be used in the hiring process
3. Voluntary, pilot biometric identifier system
4. Protection of Social Security Administration (SSA)
5. Federal preemption provisions
6. Safe harbor provision for employers using program properly
7. Exemption for temporary workers, H2A program
8. Three GAO studies

## The E-Verify Process



Source: GAO analysis based on USCIS information.

## Additional Expert Resources

- **The Cato Institute** ([www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org))
- **American Immigration Lawyers Association** ([www.aila.org](http://www.aila.org))
- **Essential Workers Immigration Coalition** ([www.ewic.org](http://www.ewic.org))
- **Immigration Works USA** ([www.immigrationworksaction.org](http://www.immigrationworksaction.org))
- **Daniel Griswold, Director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies** at the Cato Institute in Washington, DC ([dgriswold@cato.org](mailto:dgriswold@cato.org))