

# CUTT

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## Immigration Issues: Perceptions of Golf Course Superintendents

**A**ccording to federal statistics, 11,870 golf courses and country clubs reported one or more employees in 2006. This industry generated a payroll of \$7.8 billion (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). The census definition of golf courses and country clubs includes 1) establishments primarily engaged in operating golf courses (except miniature) and 2) establishments primarily engaged in operating golf courses along with dining facilities and other recreational facilities that are known as country clubs. The top 10 golfing states (California, New York, Ohio, Florida, Michigan, Texas, Pennsylvania, Illinois, North Carolina, and Wisconsin), measured in terms of golf course/country club numbers, account for about half of all golf business establishments in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

However, when looking at employment, the focal point of this study, aggregate federal data have two limitations. First, due to the seasonal nature of the industry, the size of the work force is understated because federal statistics report employee numbers during the week of March 12 each year and not during the peak of the season. A second concern relates to the types of golf

course positions included in the census data. While the survey discussed in this report focuses only on golf course maintenance employees, the Census Bureau data on golf courses include additional workers in the golf facility including the pro shop, restaurant, etc.

With these limitations in mind, the Census Bureau reports just over 309,000 employees for the U.S. in 2006. The aggregate federal data demonstrate a slow but steady upturn in employment in this industry over the past decade, with employment numbers increasing by more than 39,000 or 14% over the 1998-2006 span. During that same time frame, the number of Hispanic workers hired into golf course maintenance positions is thought to have increased dramatically. Golf course superintendents across the United States have increasingly relied on Hispanic workers to staff golf course maintenance positions and increasingly report that local workers often are not interested in golf course maintenance work or do not have a strong work ethic. Anecdotal reports from golf course superintendents indicate that Hispanic workers make important contributions. They are willing to work

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