

## What are Biometric Identifiers?

- A biometric identity system automatically recognizes an individual based on measurable biological characteristics.
- Biometric technology allows for the use of physical characteristics – facial features, fingerprints, handprints or iris scans – that can be stored in a secure database. The data is processed by a numerical algorithm to create a digital template of the physical feature. Once a person's biometric information is in the database, an employer or authorized service provider could match his or her true identity against that of anyone who might try to impersonate or steal personal information.

## Why are Biometrics Important?

- The current employment verification system is based on paper documents – which are inherently insecure and vulnerable to fraudulent use. A biometric verification system or other state-of-the-art approach must make false documents and identity theft ineffective so that employers can be assured of a legal workforce.
- If we are serious about security, the one way to achieve truly effective and efficient employee verification is to include biometric identifiers in the verification process. An electronic employment verification system incorporating biometrics would take the guesswork out of the equation, by automatically establishing the identity of an individual based on measurable biological characteristics.

## How Would Biometrics Work?

- We envision a system that would enable citizens and lawful immigrants to enroll easily as part of the process of taking a new job. Currently, all legal foreign-born residents are fingerprinted at some point during the immigration process. These fingerprints are already stored by the U.S. Government. For other individuals, many employers routinely conduct background screening of new hires, to include the capturing of biometrics in some security-sensitive sectors of the economy. We believe the employment verification could be incorporated into that process.
- The system that we propose would be an enhancement of an electronic system based on current technology. It would be available for voluntary adoption by employers who wish to achieve greater certainty in the legal status of their new employees in exchange for eliminating the current problems of document and identity fraud. We believe that a private sector market will develop to provide convenient, cost-effective, secure use of biometrics and other technologies to provide this level of certainty.

- We also do not believe that a biometric card is necessarily the answer, as each individual holds their own biometrics.

### **What About Privacy Concerns?**

- Privacy is a significant concern, however, if designed and implemented correctly, the only information accessible by an employer should be whether the prospective hire is eligible for employment.
- Employers want certainty in their workforce. If adequately funded, fairly administered, vigorously enforced and supported by state-of-the-art technology, this new system would eliminate virtually all unauthorized employment, offer the most effective protection against identity theft *and* protect privacy.

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*The Human Resource Initiative for a Legal Workforce represents human resource professionals in thousands of small and large U.S. employers across every sector of the American economy. The HR Initiative and its members are seeking to improve the current process of employment verification by creating a secure, efficient and reliable system that will ensure a legal workforce and help prevent unauthorized employment, a root cause of illegal immigration.*