

Marriott Shareholder Meeting Question
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I'm Justin Danhof, representing the National Center for Public Policy Research, a conservative, free-market think-tank.

I have a two-part question relating to a public policy issue of extreme importance to the company, and an issue that I believe is of personal interest to top executives as well: immigration.

My first question relates to an amendment Senator Ted Cruz of Texas has proposed to the so-called "Gang of 8" immigration reform bill going through the Senate at this time. Senator Cruz's amendment does not prevent a general amnesty that allows persons here unlawfully to stay and work here legally, but it prohibits those who willfully did so from being eligible for citizenship. In other words, these persons could have green cards, they could stay in the United States, their minor children could become citizens, but they would not be eligible. This amendment would address humanitarian concerns because people could legally stay and work, and it allows these individuals to legally be part of America's labor force, thus satisfying the needs of businesses that wish to employ these workers. It furthermore seems to be a middle-ground position that assuages the main concerns of those Americans who support amnesty while addressing the main concerns of those who are wary of rewarding unlawful behavior. So the first part of my question is: what is your position on this compromise?

Second, a related labor force question. Marriott executives, and other hotel executives, have long said that the hospitality industry needs immigrant labor. This implies an insufficient supply of domestic labor. Nationally, unemployment is over 7 per cent and has been for years. The unemployment rate for youth 18-29 is nearly 12 percent. Approximately 50 million Americans are on food stamps, and millions have been added to the Social Security disability rolls, reportedly in many cases not because of genuine disability, but because their unemployment ran out. Yet companies like Marriott seek immigrant labor. So our question is, why? Do Americans in large numbers prefer the social welfare system to working in the hospitality industry? Or are these Americans unqualified for these jobs, or so undisciplined at work that you don't want them? Even if Congress passes generous immigration reform, it seems we have a problem at home with the workers who already live here legally. Is something wrong with our workers? If so, what? Or is our social welfare system so generous, the hospitality industry can't compete with it?

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