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perspective

Call it 'worker replacement program'

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If you care about America, you should be very worried about what's happening to American workers.

They're threatened by the phenomenon that goes by the harmless-sounding phrase "offshore outsourcing."

Some of us think "American worker replacement program" is a better description for the use of cheaper foreign workers in countries such as India, China, the Philippines and Ireland to do service-related work such as customer service, computer programming, bill processing, legal research, income tax preparation, accounting, mortgage processing, medical transcription and X-ray interpretation.

Economic patriotism is something you don't see very much in American business anymore, and American worker replacement programs are not accidental trends. They are carefully orchestrated to obtain the cheapest labor on Earth, even if at the expense of the American worker.

It is only a matter of time before you are affected by American worker replacement programs. It doesn't matter what your job is, how good you are, how loyal you are, how experienced you are, or how much you "think" they need you. Someone will eventually take your job and give it to a cheaper foreign worker.

Do you think you are immune in your current job? At HireAmericanCitizens.org, we receive hundreds of e-mails each week from American workers who have been replaced by cheaper foreign labor. Almost everyone who writes thought they were immune for one reason or another. If you have a job in America, you are at risk.

If an American worker replacement program strikes you today, you will hit the streets with 15 million other American citizens who currently can't find a fulltime job. According to a University of California at Berkley study, you could soon be joined by another 14 million American citizens who will have their jobs sent offshore over the next five to 10 years.

American worker replacement programs come in two basic forms. Both inflict the same painful damage to workers, our communities and our country.

The first form is the importation of cheaper foreign workers under an alphabet soup of non-immigrant temporary guest worker programs, such as the H-1B and L-1 visa programs. The second form is the export of American jobs overseas to be done by cheaper foreign labor.

The addiction of U.S. employers to guest-worker programs and sending jobs overseas has caused significant losses in wealth and prosperity for middle-class Americans, and significant losses in wealth for states, cities and communities.

The massive number of cheaper foreign workers brought in by visa programs has caused career changes for millions of American workers who have permanently lost their jobs in their chosen

professions and seriously undermined and compromised the U.S. workforce. The suffering inflicted by these programs will be felt for generations.

American worker replacement programs will ultimately result in our country losing the ability to provide for itself. U.S. employers are leaving millions of American workers behind without jobs or futures. This represents a permanent loss of American jobs and American capital from our country.

Offshore outsourcing is sometimes sold as creative destruction or innovation. However, no new products or innovations are created by this process. The desired result is the same service or product produced by a cheaper foreign worker at the expense of a now-unemployed American worker. Many consumers are also quick to point out that the quality of that service or product is negatively affected when the American worker is no longer the provider.

Proponents of offshore outsourcing will sometimes claim that offshoring frees up U.S. workers to focus on work that adds more value to products, such as research and development. However, companies do not retain American workers displaced by this process and are only creating unemployed American workers.

And, the companies who displace American workers do not pass along the labor savings to consumers.

Some will try to convince you that this is all "good" for us. Some people think outsourcing jobs offshore is a good thing for the economy. However, I don't know of any displaced American workers who now consider themselves better off than they were before. I don't know of a single community that is now better off after large numbers of its citizens lost their jobs to cheaper foreign labor.

For decades we have seen our prized manufacturing jobs migrating overseas. The trend continues today. The communities where the rusted remains of these manufacturing facilities now decay have never recovered. Displaced workers were told to go back to school and retrain for jobs in technology and service sectors, but most of these workers soon realized this was easier said than done and became permanently displaced. Those who did find jobs in technology and service sectors are now losing their jobs again. Technical and service jobs - once considered the future of the U.S. economy - are now leaving our country for good.

Congress is just beginning to wake up to the fact that all of this is not good for America. They are proposing and passing legislation to counter the abandonment of American workers by U.S. corporations and government agencies. HireAmericanCitizens.org is working diligently to get legislation introduced at both the state and federal levels to fight American worker replacement programs.

Richard Armstrong is a software engineer and Parker resident who has been replaced in jobs twice by guest workers and who is active in HireAmericanCitizens.org.