

Miller Canfield, Employment Law Alliance Poll Shows Americans Divided Over Off-Shoring by U.S. Companies

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The latest national survey by the Employment Law Alliance (ELA) – the world’s largest network of employment and labor lawyers to which Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C. serves as Michigan’s representative – reveals a nation divided over the practice of off-shoring by American businesses. Nearly 60% of those polled said companies that send work overseas that could be done by U.S. workers should be punished by the federal government.

The “America At Work” survey found that:

- 39% of American workers believe that American companies should be free to outsource work overseas
- 58% believe that companies outsourcing work that could be done by Americans should be penalized by the U.S. government
- 52% said they would turn to government agencies or elected officials for help if their job was threatened by off-shoring
- 37% said they would seek help from a labor union if they thought they might lose their job due to off- shoring (Note: Only 12% of those surveyed said they currently belong to a labor union)
- 21% said they would seek recourse through the courts if their job security was threatened by the possibility of an employer sending their work overseas

But as heard at last week’s Mackinac Policy Conference, business leaders seem to agree that putting up barriers to free trade to protect jobs is not the answer.

“Government sanctioning is a quick-fix attempt at a solution, but it doesn't address the underlying issues, and, more importantly, may be counter-productive in the longer run,” says Miller Canfield business attorney, Richard A. Walawender. “The better approach is to follow industry and market trends and then to develop strategies to keep and attract high value business opportunities.”

Walawender notes, for instance, in the automotive industry, although much of the focus has been on the manufacturing sector, when companies involved in engineering, R&D, and technology services look to relocate operations overseas, Michigan risks losing its position as motor capital of the world.

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"Michigan should be trying to incentivize companies involved with upcoming diesel technologies, hybrid vehicles, software and electronics, and eventually fuel cells, to do their engineering, R&D, and high-tech development work locally. We need to be the nerve center for those developmental activities for the automotive industry; otherwise, manufacturing will have no reason to stay."

The ELA survey also asked pollsters about personal workplace experiences with off-shoring and their views toward media coverage of the topic and found the following:

- 46% said off-shoring is not as much of a crisis as the media has made it out to be
- 6% of those surveyed said they have lost a job because their work was sent overseas
- 30% know of someone, including a family member, friend or co-worker who had lost a job due to off-shoring
- 8% said they personally feel their job security is at risk because their employer might send their work overseas

Conducted by the Media, Pennsylvania-based market research firm of Reed, Haldy, McIntosh & Associates, the survey was conducted between May 21 and May 23, 2004, and has a confidence interval of +/- 4.04%.

The Employment Law Alliance is the world's largest integrated, global practice network comprised of premier, independent law firms distinguished for their practice in employment and labor law. Miller Canfield is the ELA representative for the state of Michigan. For further information, including access to the survey charts and graphs, visit www.employmentlawalliance.com.

The 330-attorney law firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C. was established in Detroit in 1852 and has offices in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Howell, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Monroe, and Troy, Michigan. Other offices are located in New York City, Pensacola, Florida, Washington, D.C., Windsor, Ontario, and in Gdynia, Katowice, and Warsaw, Poland. Visit www.millercanfield.com.