

Key Points about Retaining Foreign Graduate Student Talent in the United States

FOREIGN GRADUATE STUDENTS GROW THE US ECONOMY:

According to a study by the Institute of International Education, at the end of 2005, there were 565,039 international students studying in the U.S., contributing \$13.3 billion to the U.S. economy just in tuition and living expenses alone. Of this, 48.6% were graduate and professional students, who also contributed in teaching courses at universities, conducting research, and going on to become key contributors in driving the knowledge-based U.S. economy. We believe the exemption from H1-B caps for U.S. universities is vital to the education of the U.S. workforce but believe we should try to retain even more U.S. educated international via the offering of Visas.

CURRENT POLICY LOSES THIS POTENTIAL:

Due to more aggressive recruitment by other countries, difficulties in getting visas, and hurdles to being able to stay and work after obtaining their graduate degrees, many foreign graduate and professional students are opting not to study and work in the U.S. This is a vital loss to the U.S. economy and undermines American competitiveness in the global marketplace. The quota of 20,000 H1-B visas reserved annually for F-1 visa holders is often used-up within weeks. We need reform now.

DHS EMERGENCY RULE CHANGES ADDRESS BUT DO NOT SOLVE THIS PROBLEM:

S. 2611 (2006), passed by the Senate, would have expanded the H-1B program, and allowed all U.S. trained graduate students exemption from the H-1B cap. However, this proposal did not pass the House, and left employers without the talented workforce they needed. In response, the Department of Homeland Security announced a change to the Optional Practical Training (OPT) period, which allows F-1 student visa holders to continue working in the United States for 29 months (extended from 12 months) if they have a pending H-1B and hold a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). While this is progress, it is only a stopgap measure. The move does not address the fairness in pay provisions required by H1-B visas, which protect American workers from being replaced with cheaper labor, nor does it provide a path to citizenship for some of the world's most creative and innovative individuals. Additionally, these provisions do not allow for reform in visa status for students educated in the social sciences or humanities.

MEANINGFUL REFORM FOR FOREIGN TALENT:

- Enact the proposal in S. 2611 (2006) or similar proposal to remove the cap on H1-B visas for foreign students with U.S. graduate degrees;
- Extend the period for F-1 students to find work and streamline the F-1 and H1-B Visa Process;
- Insure extensions include students not only from STEM fields but also those in social sciences and the humanities to support intellectual equality.

Support immigration reform for student visas!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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