

NEW STEM VISA BILLS MOLLYCODDLE FOREIGN HIGH SKILLED LABOR: ARE THEY REALLY WORTH PAMPERING?

VISA



The Congress has suddenly woken up to the worth and value of the high skilled worker and feels that such people have a lot to contribute intellectually to the country. A few in the Congress are inclined towards giving special visas to non-American students schooled in American Universities, especially those with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math. On Friday House judiciary Chairman Lamar Smith presented a bill that would grant 55,000 visas to students who fall under this category. He said that this was necessary as these students had the capacity and knowledge to start companies that created new jobs or even devise something new, that could set off a totally new avenue of work. "In a global economy, we cannot afford to educate these foreign graduates in the US and then send them back home to work for our competitors." Critics argue that it could seriously undermine diversity at the workplace would be at the expense of the green card "lottery" system that aims to diversify the immigrant population to the United States. The bill says that it will give first preference to PhD recipients, from 217 Universities that the Carnegie Foundation has listed as the country's top research institutions. They will be allowed to work in the United States for five years. Countering claims that this could hamper job prospects of US workers, the bill says that companies wanting to hire such workers must first post the job on the site of state workforce agencies. It is quite obvious that the US needs more STEM immigrants and there is a general consensus on it. 165 university presidents wrote to President Obama seeking his support, the Fed agrees on this and 3 out of 4 Americans support such a move. Muzzafar Chisti, the director of the Migration Policy Institute's Office at the New York University law school said, that what so beautiful about the country's immigration system that it allowed diverse streams of people to come together without any discrimination. "The diversity visas had provided another stream of balancing the ethnic and racial composition of our immigration stream and that itself is a value," he said. Mr. Chisti feared that whilst everyone seemed to be advocating for the new visa, there was no one speaking out on behalf of the old system and this could result in it being sacrificed for the new one. Many felt that even though it was important the STEM visas were given, it was equally important that there was no cutting back on other visa programs. Sen. Mark Warner (D) of Virginia said that "There should be bipartisan support for efforts to retain the world's best and brightest after they've received STEM training at American universities. It makes no sense that we require these graduates to return home so they can compete against us." The Democrats have also introduced a rival STEM bill but with some significant differences from the Republican bill. Both the bills are same in the number of visas and to whom they should be provided. But that is where the resemblance ends. The Democrat bill, introduced by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), retains the diversity visa or green card lottery whilst the Republican Bill does away with it. The rival bill creates a new "EB-6" green card category for the visa lottery. This will allow them to look into it after two years, analyzes its pros and cons, and then decide whether to withdraw it or to retain it. The Republican proposal is sans such a safety measure. Furthermore the Democrats bills say that the STEM visa holders must receive "the actual wage paid to U.S. workers with similar levels of experience." The US house now has two STEM visa bills, what course legislation will take will probably have to wait till after the elections.