

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 22, 2007

Dear Madame Speaker and Majority Leader:

We are writing to request that the House of Representatives take action this year to resolve the immediate talent crisis that is facing U.S. employers. The United States is struggling to produce enough highly skilled, highly educated experts in fields that are absolutely essential to American competitiveness: science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and others. Meanwhile, our outdated visa programs for the most highly skilled workers from abroad are hopelessly out of line with the needs of the U.S. economy. U.S. employers have no way to get the talent they need, and our country's competitive edge is at risk. There are many legislative reforms that could be taken, both short and long term. If America is to remain a worldwide leader in innovation, the New Democrat Coalition strongly believes Congress must act to alleviate the talent crisis before we adjourn this year.

The main visa category that U.S. employers rely on for critically needed experts – the H-1B visa – is in such short supply that, last spring when applications could first be filed for this year's visas, all of the visas for the entire year ran out in a matter of hours. So many applications were filed for so few visas that the government literally held a lottery to decide which workers would join the American workforce. Over half of the U.S. employers in the lottery wound up losers. This is no way for the world's economic leader to stay ahead in the race for the world's best talent.

The green card situation for the highly skilled is no better. Today, in many key employment-based green card categories, a visa slot is only available to those who started the permanent residence process five or more years ago. The U.S. cannot expect to remain the top destination for the world's most talented students and professionals when prospects for a green card remain distant spots on the horizon, especially when competing countries abroad are welcoming these experts by making it easier, not harder, to gain permanent residence.

This crisis is eroding U.S. job creation and is dulling the U.S. competitive edge. In the long term, Congress must resolve this crisis through a series of reforms, including:

- Modernizing student visa programs;
- Aligning the supply of H-1B visas for professional workers with the needs of U.S. employers so that the visa supply can respond to market demands;
- Bringing the supply of employment-based green cards into line with the needs of U.S. employers;
- "Recapturing" authorized but unused green card numbers; and
- Strengthening agencies' ability to enforce visa program rules and punish violators.

It goes without saying that our nation must find ways to educate and train our own workforce in these critical fields, and hiring skilled American workers should remain a priority for American businesses. Raising the skill level of the American workforce is the most critical part of America's long-term competitiveness strategy for meeting the needs of our global economy – and accomplishments in this

area, including passage of the COMPETES Act, are a major first step. Forward-looking immigration reform, however, can both alleviate the shortage in the near term and provide increased funding, through visa fees, for retraining and educating the U.S. workforce.

If the U.S. is to remain first in the field in innovation and global competitiveness, we must take some action this year to find a short-term solution to this ongoing talent crisis.

We also urge that the U.S. House of Representatives take action to provide short-term fixes to help address other pressing workforce needs critical to America's small and seasonal businesses, farmers, and hospitals by:

- Extending the existing exemption of returning seasonal or temporary workers, who have received an H-2B visa in one of the three previous fiscal years, from counting against the 66,000 H-2B visa cap;
- Recapturing approximately 61,000 unused EB3 visas from 1996-97 that will provide approximately 25,000 visas for registered nurses and physical therapists; and
- Simplifying and expediting the H-2A visa approval process for agricultural workers.

The New Democrat Coalition stands ready to work with you to accomplish these goals before Congress adjourns this year.

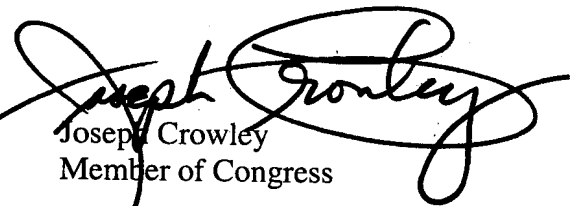
Sincerely,



Ellen Tauscher
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



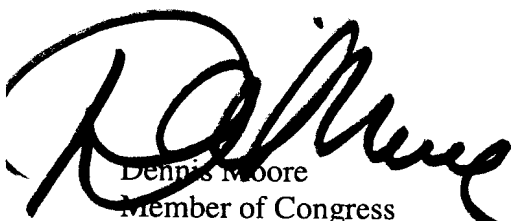
Artur Davis
Member of Congress



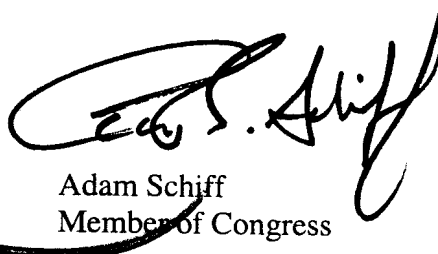
Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



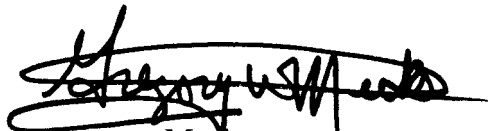
Dennis Moore
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
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Jim Moran
Member of Congress



Gregory Meeks
Member of Congress



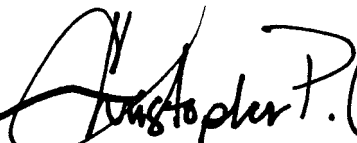
Susan Davis
Member of Congress



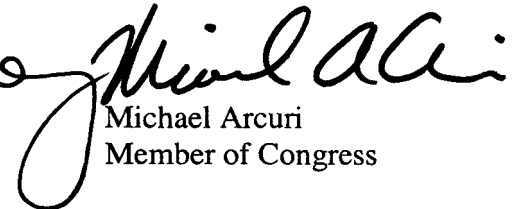
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress



Christopher Carney
Member of Congress



Michael Arcuri
Member of Congress

David Wu
Member of Congress

CC: Majority Whip James E. Clyburn
Democratic Caucus Chair Rahm Emanuel
Democratic Caucus Vice-Chair John B. Larson
Assistant to the Speaker Xavier Becerra
Chairman John Conyers Jr., Committee on the Judiciary
Chairwoman Zoe Lofgren, Subcommittee on Immigration