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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

**RULES COMMITTEE HEARING ON H.R. , "THE INTELLIGENCE
AUTHORIZATION ACT"**

AMENDMENTS JACKSON_450 & 451)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2012; 3:00PM



TALKING POINTS

I thank the Chairman for this opportunity to explain both my amendments to H.R. 6429 “STEM Jobs Act.”

My amendments would protect the Diversity Immigration Visa Program and would authorize Congress or the Secretary of Homeland Security to redistribute unused STEM visas to other classes of immigrant visas.

As we work to resolve this nation’s immigration issues; we must not rob Peter in order to pay Paul; unfortunately this bill eliminates as many visas as it creates.

As you already know, hundreds of thousands of immigrants become legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States every year. Only a small fraction of these visas, approximately 55,000, are through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program.

H.R. 6429 attempt to increase the STEM Visa program is an admirable one; however, I firmly believe it should not come at the expense of the Diversity Immigration Visa Program.

I have long advocated for the need to increase the availability of qualified STEM trained professionals.

- The U.S. economic base has shifted from focusing on mainly manufacturing of durable goods to processing and analyzing information. In this information-driven economy, the most valuable assets are human resources in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that science and engineering occupations are projected to grow by 21.4% from 2004 to 2014, which is significantly higher than the projected growth of 13% in all other occupations during the same time period.
- **Further more than 3 million job openings in STEM related fields will be created by 2018 that will require a bachelor's degree or higher (Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce).**
- **At our current rate, the United States falls short of those needs by more than a million workers (National Science Foundation).**

- **We can all agree that we must increase the amount of available professionals who are qualified to work in STEM fields.**

- **I have supported Rep. Lofgren's bill, H.R. 6412 which is a clean STEM Visa bill and creates a visa program for students graduating with advanced STEM degrees from U.S. research universities, WITHOUT eliminating the Diversity Visa Program .**

- **America's ability to extend its arms and welcome immigrants is more than a cultural tradition; it is a fundamental promise of our democracy.**

- **Our Constitution does not limit citizenship by background or birth. Instead, our nation is bound together by a shared love of liberty and a conviction that all people are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**
- **The Diversity Immigration Visa Program is designed to give a small percentage of immigrants the opportunity to attain a green card and live the American dream.**
- According to CRS in 1994 only 10 countries were sending 100 or more diversity immigrants. FY 1994 was the final year of a transitional lottery which set aside 40% of these visas for natives of Ireland.

- In 2009, 49% of the 47,8879 diversity immigrants came from Africa, which is only 11% of the total number of 1.1 million LPRS in FY 2009
- Europe sent 105 of all LPRS in FY 2009, but made up 28% of all diversity immigrants.
- Throughout our history programs such as the Diversity Visa Program not only increases the diversity by also the utility of our great nation.
- **Emma Lazarus authored the sonnet “New Colossus”** It was used to raise funds for the pedestal upon which the Statue of Liberty now stands.

- **Ms. Lazarus words are known to people all around the world "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"**
- **In a stroke of irony, Emma whose words have endured the ages, would not be able to attend the unveiling of *Lady* Liberty because women were not allowed attend the ceremony.**
- **Today, we once again insult the very notion of what it means to be an American. This bill would deny access to the very people that Statue of Liberty has welcomed to our shores for centuries.**

- I agree, most Democrats agree, and clearly many Republicans as well.... we need to increase the amount of STEM Visas. What should not and must not happen is trampling on what makes us Americans...our diversity our acceptance of those who come to our shores for an opportunity.

- The Diversity Program allocates green cards to applicants from countries that have a low rate of emigration to the U.S.. These applicants are chosen through a random selection process and since the implementation of this program there has not been an argument that these individuals have been in any shape or form anything but valued members of our communities.

The U.S. Department of State reports that more than 4.5 million relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents are waiting for immigrant visas in the four family preference categories. There are only 226,000 visas available each year. Currently, the brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens can range from 12 to 24 years. It is clear that millions of people want to emigrate to the United States and we should continue to be a beacon.

As this measure only addresses employment-based preferences, there is a queue of more than 4.6 million people. They wait can be as long as 9 years.

Given the current immigrant visa backlog, the visas that are not being utilized by STEM applicants should be redistributed to other classes of immigrant visa at Congresses discretion and if not allocated by Congress then by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

I agree with the Chairman Smith, we should increase the STEM program by 55,000. I also believe we should expand not eliminate the Diversity Program.

We must not sacrifice the sliver of a chance, the literal lottery, for individuals from parts of the world that have a limited opportunity to live in the United States.

I urge you to support my amendments; America is the home of the brave and the land of the free. We all believe in supporting future innovators and advancing individuals that we have trained in STEM fields.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

"New Colossus"

By

Emma Lazarus. Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"