



Fact Sheet: The STEM Jobs Act (H.R. 6429)

Background: Graduates of American universities in science, technology, engineering, and math – or “STEM” fields – are behind many of the innovations and new businesses that are part of our present and future economic growth. Talented students from around the world contribute to the graduate STEM programs of our universities. Foreign students receive nearly four out of every 10 master’s degrees awarded in STEM fields and about the same percentage of all doctorates.

But our immigration system does not always put American interests first. We have the most generous level of legal immigration in the world but we select only 5% of our immigrants based on the skills and education they bring to America. Although these foreign graduates of U.S. universities in STEM fields are in great demand by American employers, many of them end up on years-long green card waiting lists. And as a result, many of them give up and go to work for one of our global competitors.

In an ever-competitive global economy, we must keep our country as the world’s greatest source of innovation and creativity. The STEM Jobs Act helps employers to more easily fill their talent needs with foreign graduates of U.S. universities so that they can continue creating jobs and growing our economy.

Summary of the STEM Jobs Act (H.R. 6429): The STEM Jobs Act eliminates the diversity lottery green card program and reallocates up to 55,000 green cards a year to new green card programs for foreign graduates of U.S. universities with advanced STEM degrees. These green cards are first made available to foreign graduates with doctorates and any remaining green cards are then made available for foreign graduates with master’s degrees.

Which Students Qualify?

PhDs: The bill creates a new green card category for aliens who have received STEM doctorates from U.S. universities. Foreign students will be eligible for STEM green cards if they –

- Have received a doctorate from an eligible U.S. university in computer science, engineering, mathematics, or the physical sciences (other than biological sciences);
- Have taken all their course work (including internet courses) while physically present in the United States; and
- Are petitioned for by an employer who has gone through labor certification to show that there are not sufficient American workers able, willing, qualified and available for the job.

Master’s Degrees: The bill creates a new green card category for aliens who have received STEM master’s degrees from U.S. universities. If any green cards are not used by aliens with doctorates, they will then be made available to foreign graduates with master’s degrees. To be eligible, an alien must –

- Have received a two year master’s degree from an eligible U.S. university in computer science, engineering, mathematics, or the physical sciences (other than biological sciences);
- Have majored in college in a STEM field;
- Have taken all their course work (including internet courses) while physically present in the United States; and
- Be petitioned for by an employer who has gone through labor certification.

Which Universities Qualify? The STEM Jobs Act narrowly defines what constitutes a research university to ensure the STEM green card system is not just a golden ticket for those wanting to come to the U.S. To qualify for the STEM green card program, a school must –

- Be eligible for federal student financial aid programs;
- Be accredited;
- Be classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a doctorate-granting university with very high or high level of research activity, or be classified by the National Science Foundation after the date of enactment, pursuant to an application by the university, as having equivalent research activity to such schools; and
- Be at least 10 years old.

The STEM Jobs Act Protects Americans Students and Workers. In order to protect American students and workers in STEM fields, the bill requires as part of the labor certification process that an employer submit a job order to the appropriate state workforce agency. In addition, the bill requires that the state workforce agency post the job order on its official agency website to make it more accessible to American workers seeking employment.

The bill also requires that the Department of Homeland Security post on its official website information about the employers who sponsor STEM graduates for green cards, the number of STEM graduates they sponsor, and the occupations of the STEM graduates they sponsor.

In addition, because of the often difficult career prospects for American students graduating with PhDs in biological and biomedical fields, foreign students with degrees in these fields will not be eligible for STEM green cards.

The STEM Jobs Act Makes Changes to Our Immigration System to Prioritize Families. The bill expands the “V” nonimmigrant visa program to allow the spouses and minor children of permanent residents to wait in the U.S. (without work authorization) for green cards to become available after they have spent one year on the green card waiting list. Currently, almost 90,000 green cards for the spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents are made available each year. But there are currently over 322,000 spouses and minor children on a waiting list.

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