



November 28, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader Pelosi and  
Minority Leader McConnell:

The vote scheduled for this Friday on HR 6429, a bill centered on the common bipartisan belief that the world's top talent have and always will help drive U.S. growth, is an opportunity for the House to advance two key immigration reforms.

First, the bill would redirect the 55,000 immigration visas now awarded randomly to individuals required to have only a high school diploma and no ties to the United States, to advanced degree STEM graduates of American schools selected by American employers. At this critical time in the U.S. economy and with a widely reported and persistent skills gap, it is essential that U.S. employers be able to access the highly skilled talent they need to grow our economy and drive job creation and innovation. There is broad, bipartisan support for allowing those we educate to stay and contribute to America's innovation economy, and now is the time to enact this needed reform.

Second, by allowing the spouses and minor children of current green card holders to unite legally with their families in the United States while waiting for their green cards, HR 6429 would be the most effective benefit for nuclear family immigration in more than 20 years. The current delay imposed on these spouses and minor children, which has been as long as six years, is a major driver of illegal immigration, and allowing them to legally join their families is a step that will curb the number of undocumented persons trying to enter this country.

Let us be clear – neither the American Council on International Personnel, IEEE-USA, the Semiconductor Industry Association nor the Society for Human Resource Management has any particular objection to the immigration lottery. On the contrary, we all supported its passage in the *Immigration Act of 1990*, and we applaud its unequivocal success. It restored the traditional flow of immigration from Eastern Europe, and in less than 20 years, it provided for more voluntary immigration from Africa than in the entire prior history of the United States. It is important to recognize that because it has been so successful, random selection is no longer a priority. Family- and employment-based immigration from Africa, for example, has increased 860 percent. America will continue to benefit from regular immigration from African nations at a level roughly equal to the entire lottery program (52,000 in 2011 alone).

Additionally, because STEM students in the United States are from those same countries eligible for the lottery, it will be better for the American economy that the diversity of our immigration system rely on the hiring decisions of American employers based on skills and a prior attempt to hire an American, and not on luck.

We believe Congress should comprehensively fix our immigration laws, but after many years of efforts to achieve that laudable goal in one leap, we are skeptical of the strategy that insists we cannot do anything, until we do everything, because that has produced nothing.

In the 2012 election, the American people voted for divided government, so it will take a level of effective bipartisan cooperation that we have not seen on immigration in many years. It is difficult for us to see how rejecting this balanced proposal now will make it easier to do other, more difficult things later.

The vote on Friday is a stepping stone that can pave the way to future immigration reforms. We hope the House passes it, and we hope the Senate will vote on it before adjourning. We urge the President to support it and sign it into law.

It is a very good start.

Sincerely,

American Council on International Personnel  
IEEE-USA  
Semiconductor Industry Association  
Society for Human Resource Management