

July 30, 2008

Honorable Members of Congress
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the House of Representatives:

We, the undersigned associations, coalitions and organizations, have been working with you, and your fellow colleagues in the House, on much-needed reforms to our nation's immigration laws. We remain strongly committed to comprehensive immigration reform, but recognize this effort will have to wait for a new Congress and a new Administration. We intend to make this issue a high priority in 2009.

However, we believe there are some modest repairs that can be made this year to address current problems in our legal immigration system. These modest repairs can begin to address serious backlogs that impose undue burdens on hundreds of thousands of families and countless businesses, universities, hospitals, and other employers, large and small, across our country.

One approach that will begin to provide some relief to these families and businesses is embodied in HR 5882, bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives Zoe Lofgren and James Sensenbrenner. This legislation would recapture unused permanent resident visas, otherwise known as green cards, lost through bureaucratic delay each year. This recapture would help to begin to reduce the massive backlog that exists for these visas in part because of these bureaucratic delays.

Currently, it is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of previously authorized but unused employment-based and family-based green cards. These green cards were unused not because of a temporary lull in demand, but because of administrative and processing issues that occurred during the fiscal years they were made available. Under the law today, green cards that are not issued in the year they are allocated simply vanish at midnight at the fiscal year's end. The federal government's failure to efficiently utilize these visas has needlessly added to the backlog delays, while adding personal and professional strain to tens of thousands of families.

The delays in processing employment-based visas are creating enormous recruitment and retention problems for many of our nation's most innovative companies and uncertainty for critically needed employees. For families, the delays in processing are unnecessarily helping to contribute to a 7 to 10 year wait for legal permanent residents to be reunited with their spouses and minor children. These delays not only undermine families but delay the process of integration while legal permanent residents work to support two separate households.

The Lofgren/Sensenbrenner legislation would address this problem by allowing for previously authorized and unused green cards to be recaptured and applied to the current family- and employment-based backlogs. It would address these backlogs without creating one new green card. The Department of State has testified that this is the “perfect solution” to the annual loss of green cards through processing delays.

This proposal would provide modest but important relief for our economy, and immediate and substantial relief for tens of thousands of families. It is important to emphasize again that the Lofgren/Sensenbrenner legislation provides only short-term relief, and does not reduce the urgency of comprehensive immigration reform, or our collective commitment to working with the 111th Congress to enact comprehensive reform. Indeed, enactment of HR 5882 will represent a key first step toward the kind of broad-based bipartisan cooperation we will need if comprehensive reform is to be successful.

For these reasons, we urge the the House to consider and approve this short-term immigration relief measure, and we stand ready to work with you to see that these amendments become law this year.

Sincerely,

American Council of Engineering Companies
American Council on Education
American Council on International Personnel
American Electronics Association
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian American Justice Center
Asian American Institute
Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California
Association of American Universities
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
BITS, A division of the Financial Services Roundtable
Business Roundtable
Business Software Alliance
Center for Community Change
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Computer & Communications Industry Association
Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)
Compete America
Entertainment Software Association
Episcopal Church
Hate Free Zone
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Hmong National Development, Inc.
Global Personnel Alliance
Immigration Voice
Information Technology Association of America
Information Technology Industry Council
Irish Apostate, USA
Japanese American Citizens League
Jubilee Campaign
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Legal Momentum
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee US Washington Office
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
Education Fund
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
National Association of Manufacturers
National Council of La Raza
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
National Foreign Trade Council
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
Organization of Chinese Americans
Partnership for New York City
Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International (SEMI)
Semiconductor Industry Association
Silicon Valley Leadership Group
Software & Information Industry Association
South Asian Americans Leading Together
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Standing for Truth Foundation
The Technology Network (TechNet)
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
US Chamber of Commerce
US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
World Relief
YKASEC – Empowering the Korean American Community