

# Compete America

The Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

## AMERICA'S INNOVATION EDGE AT RISK:

### *The Importance of Fixing the EB Green Card and H-1B Visa Systems This Year*

#### – THE ISSUE –

##### *Highly Educated Professionals Benefit America*

- ▶ U.S. employers hire highly educated, foreign-born engineers, scientists, researchers, medical professionals and teachers – working professionals who keep America on the cutting edge of knowledge and innovation.
- ▶ Employment-based (EB) green cards allow these much-needed and highly sought-after professionals to remain living, working and innovating in America.
- ▶ These highly educated professionals are largely recruited and hired using temporary H-1B visas.

#### – THE PROBLEM –

##### *Outdated System Blocks U.S. Employers' Access to Worldwide Talent*

- ▶ Massive backlogs in the EB green card system leave some professionals waiting up to nine years or more. Many other countries are exploiting our visa restrictions and systemic delays by offering highly educated immigrants green card equivalents in far less time.
- ▶ The FY 2009 H-1B visa cap was exhausted within days in April 2008. The FY 2010 and FY 2011 caps took nearly nine months and 10 months, respectively, to be hit. Demand for H-1Bs has historically fluctuated and will likely continue to fluctuate in spite of the rigid system of visa allocation in the United States. Tying H-1Bs to the needs of the economy, not the current arbitrary cap, makes more sense.

#### – THE IMPACT –

##### *Lost Talent, Jobs and Economic Opportunities*

- ▶ 25.3% of all engineering and technology companies established in the U.S. between 1995 and 2005 inclusive had at least one immigrant key founder. Together, this pool of immigrant-founded companies was responsible for generating more than \$52 billion in 2005 sales and creating just under 450,000 jobs as of 2005. (*Vivek Wadhwa et.al., 2007*) America can't afford to lose this valuable talent.
- ▶ Without immediate visa reform, we will lose many of the best U.S. educated minds in the world. A significant number of H-1B visas sought by U.S. companies are foreign nationals who received advanced degrees from U.S. universities. *There is currently no other direct path from student to green card*, and students then face multi-year waits for permanent residence due to backlogs in the green card system.
- ▶ Under our current system, we educate foreign students in our best universities, train them in our companies – and then drive them to competitor nations through an antiquated visa system.

#### ★ THE SOLUTION ★

*Congress Must Fix the EB Green Card and H-1B Visa Systems This Year*