

April 12, 2013

Technology Committee Updates: Ongoing I-Squared Advocacy and Plans for Future Events

Thank you to the committee members who participated in yesterday's committee meeting via conference call. Our discussion included an update on the NEC's ongoing advocacy in support of the Immigration Innovation Act and comprehensive immigration reform, as well as a discussion of several ideas for programming in the next several months.

I-Squared Advocacy

In late March, the Council sent a letter to all members of the New England Congressional delegation urging them to support measures to address the shortage of high-skilled workers in the STEM fields in comprehensive immigration reform. The letter endorsed the provisions of the bipartisan Immigration Innovation Act, or "I-Squared." [Click here for more background on the legislation and to view the NEC's letter.](#)

Since the NEC's letter, support for I-Squared continues to grow. In fact, Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) signed on as a co-sponsor of the bill as a result of the Council's letter. To complement this advocacy on the Hill, NEC President & CEO Jim Brett has also penned an op-ed piece outlining the Council's position. The piece has been submitted to several publications in the region, and ran earlier this week in [The Providence Journal](#).

The Council also continues to be an active member of [inSPIRE STEM USA](#), a bipartisan coalition of businesses as well as education and immigration advocates supporting I-Squared. Along with other coalition members, we met with Senator Richard Blumenthal's office regarding the bill earlier this week, and next week we have arranged for coalition members to meet with Sen. Elizabeth Warren's office. We also signed on to the coalition's recent [letter to the "Gang of Eight"](#) urging them to include the STEM fund in their comprehensive immigration reform bill.

We have also been in contact with several of our region's Governors urging them to support I-Squared and learned this week that the National Governor's Association will be announcing their support specifically for the STEM Fund element of I-Squared early next week.

It is expected that the "Gang of Eight" bill that will be released early next week will include an increase in the number of H-1B visas available to highly-skilled foreign-born workers, however we are concerned that the bill will not include the STEM fund element of I-Squared. We anticipate participating in additional advocacy efforts with inSPIRE STEM USA in the coming weeks with the goal of having the STEM Fund included in any legislation that goes to the Senate Floor.

Cybersecurity Events in Boston and Washington, DC

We also discussed ideas for two possible upcoming events in the coming months:

1. **Congressional Staff Panel Discussion on Cybersecurity, Washington, DC** – We would like to host an event in Washington featuring a panel discussion on the prospects for Congressional action on cybersecurity. We would invite Congressional staffers to members of the New England delegation who work on cybersecurity issues to participate in the panel. The hosted a similar type event last December on defense issues, and found it to be an excellent opportunity for our members to connect with key hill staffers and to hear directly from those working very closely on these issues. Our target date is June 2013. ***If you would like to assist in planning of this event, or have suggestions for panelists, please contact Emily Heisig or Taylor Pichette (contact info below).***
2. **Briefing on Cybersecurity Executive Order, Boston** – As part of the Annual Spring Event in Washington, DC, we had a small group meeting featuring a presentation by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding the implementation of the recent Executive Order on Cybersecurity. We are following up with DHS's regional office in Boston to arrange for a similar briefing and Q&A session with a local DHS representative. Given the nature of the Executive Order and its broad impact across a range of sectors, this briefing could be opened up to the entire NEC.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, or would like more information on any of the items discussed here, please contact Emily Heisig (eheisig@newenglandcouncil.com) / 617-365-2647) or Taylor Pichette (tpichette@newenglandcouncil.com) / 202-547-0048).

We look forward to seeing you soon.