

April 22, 2013

Technology Committee Update: Gang of Eight Immigration Bill Includes Increase in H-1B Visas, STEM Fund

NEC Technology Committee Members:

We hope that you and your loved ones are all safe following last week's tragic events. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the attacks.

We wanted to give you several updates on the Council's ongoing advocacy efforts regarding high skilled immigration reform.

Jim Brett's Op-Ed in Regional Newspapers

NEC President & CEO Jim Brett has penned an op-ed piece urging Congress to address the shortage of highly skilled STEM workers as they proceed with comprehensive immigration reform efforts. That piece has been published in several regional newspapers in recent weeks:

- [Boston Business Journal, April 19](#)
- [Hartford Business Journal, April 14](#)
- [Providence Journal, April 10](#)

Gang of Eight CIR Bill Includes H-1B Increase, STEM Fund

As you know, last week, the Senate's "Gang of Eight" unveiled its bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform proposal. The Council is pleased that the bill takes significant steps toward addressing the STEM skills gap. While the bill does not go as far as the Immigration Innovation Act (I-Squared)—legislation that the Council has endorsed—we believe it is a step in the right direction.

The Council issued a press release commending the Gang of Eight bill for including an increase in H-1B visas and a STEM fund. [Click here to read the release.](#)

Along with the press release, we also provided a Fact Sheet on the STEM Skills Gap in New England. [Click here to view the Fact Sheet.](#)

Here is a breakdown of the Gang of Eight Bill vs. I-Squared in terms of high skilled immigration & STEM education:

H-1B Visas

- ***I-Squared***: Increases the cap on H-1B visas to 115,000; implements a newly designed

market regulator to adjust the cap based on demand; implements an employer fee of \$500 for employers with under 25 full-time employees and \$1000 for employers with over 25 full-time employees; reallocates those fees to STEM fund.

- **Gang of Eight:** Increases the cap on H-1B visas to 110,000; allows for cap to be increased up to 180,00 in future years based upon “High Skilled Jobs Index;” implements a \$500 fee for employers of all sizes which is allocated to STEM Fund.

STEM Fund

- **.I-Squared:** Reallocates fees collected from H-1B visas and STEM green cards to fund a grant program to promote STEM education and worker retraining to be administered by the states.
- **Gang of Eight:** Reallocates the fees collected from H-1B visas to a “STEM Education and Training Account,” whereby \$500 per application will be allocated to:
 - 60% to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for scholarships for low income students seeking STEM degrees
 - 15% to the Director of NSF to carry out a direct or matching grant program to support public-private partnerships in K-12 for STEM
 - 12% for NSF program grants for STEM education at minority serving institutions of higher education
 - 10% for Department of Labor demonstration programs
 - 1.5% to Department of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement
 - 1.5% to the Department of Labor for general purposes, such as decreasing processing time.

[Click here to view a Politico article comparing the two STEM Fund proposals.](#)

[Click here to view the 17-page summary of the Gang of Eight comprehensive immigration reform bill.](#)

As always, if you have questions or feedback, or would like any additional information, please contact Emily Heisig (eheisig@newenglandcouncil.com or 617-365-2647) or Taylor Pichette (tpichette@newenglandcouncil.com or 202-547-0048).