

House Subcommittee Continues Assault on All Forms of Immigration

Released on Tue, Apr 05, 2011

Washington D.C. - Opponents of immigration reform are often quick to differentiate their disdain for unauthorized immigration from their alleged support of legal immigration. However, finding any evidence of that support has always been elusive and, over the past several months, the House Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement has conducted hearings that question the value of all forms of immigration. They continue to perpetuate the myth that all immigrants - including legal immigrants - are stealing jobs from native-born workers.

Today, the committee continues these same attacks on legal channels of immigration with a hearing on diversity visas, a program which provides 55,000 green cards annually by lottery to persons from countries that do not currently send many immigrants to the United States. The diversity visa is a relatively small program designed to increase the diversity of our immigrant flows. One prime example of a diversity visa winner is famed soccer player Freddy Adu.

The Subcommittee's hearing last week on H-1B visas was another example of their political strategy that attempts to pit one category of immigrants against another, as well as to isolate issues rather than looking at them in context. The H-1B visa program is the main immigration category used by U.S. employers to bring foreign, professional-level talent to the U.S. for key positions. While it is used a great deal by the IT industry, it is also used for countless other highly specialized positions that require at least a baccalaureate degree in a specific field. H-1B petitions are sought for nanoscientists, applied mathematicians, risk analysts, pharmaceutical researchers, automotive designers, international legal experts, film editors, and micro-imaging engineers. We know that despite the high rate of unemployment in the U.S., we still have major shortages in highly technical fields. The H-1B is often used by employers to address those shortages. Furthermore, studies show that, overall, five jobs are created for every H-1B worker brought into the U.S. The sharing of knowledge in highly technical fields typically results in innovation and expansion of opportunities and employment for native-born workers.

While there are a range of appropriate questions that can be asked about immigration, proposing the elimination of a class of visas without looking at the broader issues inevitably pits groups of immigrants and other stakeholders against each other - rather than creating a real dialogue about how to create an immigration system that operates as a valuable resource to the American economy. The lack of genuine oversight and stewardship on the part of the Subcommittee's leadership makes one wonder what their real motives are.

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