



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Wednesday, March 06, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Organization: [National Association of Graduate-Professional Students](http://www.nagps.org)

Contact: Fang Zhang, (626) 537-0116, disc@nagps.org

NO SILVER BULLET IN IMMIGRATION-- CONCERNS AND PROPOSITION ON EB VISA REFORM

On February 7th, 2019 the **Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act** was introduced in both houses of Congress. Senators Mike Lee (R-UT) and Kamala Harris (D-CA) introduced the senate version of the bill, (S. 386), and the matching House bill, (H.R. 1044), was introduced by Representatives Ken Buck (R-CO) and Susan Lofgren (D-CA). This bipartisan legislation aims to reform the process of employment-based (EB) Lawful Permanent Residency (LPR), commonly known as Green Card, by removing the existing per-country cap (7%) on Green Card issuances. The bill aims to clear the backlog and reduce the loss of high skilled immigrant workers due to long wait times for Green Cards. The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) is supportive of legislative efforts aimed at retaining and cultivating international intellectual capital in the United States and believes this legislation could be improved by amending it to prioritize international students with advanced degrees from U.S. academic institutions when processing Green Card applications.

NAGPS believes that retaining highly skilled and highly educated international students in the United States should be of paramount importance to our legislators. Recently, DHS has approved a regulatory rule that prioritizes U.S. educated applicants for the issuance of H1-B visas. Adopting similar legislative policy for the Green Card program would further support the U.S. retaining its international intellectual capital. This is important because international students make many contributions to the U.S. economic and cultural fabrics, contributing \$39 billion dollars to the economy in 2018, founding nearly one out of four billion-dollar startups, and conducting world class research at our academic institutions.

Even though S.386 and H.R.1044 attempt to address clearing the current backlog of Green Card applicants, as currently written, the legislation would likely result in longer wait times for many new applicants. Estimates are that it will likely take four (4) years to clear the current backlog of more than 200,000 applicants. This means new petitioners, which would likely include recently graduated international students, will have to wait at least four years before their applications could be processed. This legislation also presents the likelihood that countries with larger populations, submitting Green Card applications at a higher rate, would effectively "crowd out" applicants from smaller countries who submit applications at a much lower rate, resulting in a longer wait times.

NAGPS will continue to engage with our legislators on this issue and others that remain to be addressed that involve international students such as increasing the annual cap on Green Cards and H1-B visas, creating a process to enable stateside renewal of F-type academic visas; and others that could be addressed in a comprehensive immigration bill. We encourage graduate-professional students, faculty members, supporters, partners and allies, to actively engage with us on social media, during Call Congress Days, and other calls to action as we continue to advocate for international students and advance higher education in the U.S.

#####

[NAGPS](http://www.nagps.org) is a national non-profit composed of graduate and professional student governments across the US that represents over 144,000 graduate and professional students at a diverse group of member institutions.