

Immigration

The United States is known throughout the world as the land of opportunity and attracts many foreigners who want to pursue the American Dream. America's rich cultural diversity is a product of those who have immigrated here throughout our history.

As a first-generation American, Rep. Eshoo has a deep appreciation for the broad ethnic mosaic that makes America a great country. Rep. Eshoo sees her job in Congress as an opportunity to promote sound immigration policies that benefit U.S. employers and laborers, provide ample and equal opportunities for people to immigrate legally into our country, and stem the flow of illegal immigration across our borders.

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Legal Immigration

Rep. Eshoo is committed to balancing the needs of U.S. employers with employment opportunities for U.S. residents and foreign laborers. She places great value on the positive contribution of temporary laborers and skilled foreign professionals in a variety of fields, from agriculture to medicine to advanced computing.

According to the Department of Labor, 53 percent of the nation's agricultural workforce is composed of unsanctioned foreign laborers. In California, that number is estimated to be as high as 90 percent in largely agricultural areas. Rep. Eshoo cosponsored H.R. 371, the AgJobs Act of 2007, to meet the seasonal and temporary labor needs of California farmers and reduce incentives for workers to stay in the U.S. illegally. This legislation streamlines the cumbersome process for farmers to access legal migrant workers approved for H-2A agricultural temporary visas, and creates a two-stage process for H-2A visa holders and their families to become permanent legal residents, should they choose to do so.

In Silicon Valley, employers need high-skilled laborers in the fields of science, medicine, engineering and high technology. Better educational opportunities for students and additional training of the current workforce are essential (read about the Democrats' Innovation Agenda), but U.S. companies can't merely wait for these efforts to take root. If outstanding talent can't be found in or brought to the U.S., the technology, the innovation, and the work will go abroad. While foreign students account for a large percentage of the graduating classes at many of our science and engineering graduate and professional schools, these students often do not have the option of remaining in the U.S. after they have earned their degrees, even if they are offered employment.

The unavailability of visas for skilled professional workers is a serious problem and could significantly impact our nation's competitive edge. In September of 2005, the Department of Homeland Security announced that the annual cap of 65,000 H-1B visas for temporary foreign professional had already been reached for 2006, a record since the quota was enacted in 1992. This year, the record was broken when the cap was reached in just one day for FY 2008. In 2004, Congress authorized an additional 20,000 H-1B visas be set aside each year for highly specialized workers (those holding a master's degree or higher). The cap was reached on May 4th, 2007.

Providing the right types and quantities of visas for temporary and skilled foreign workers is a crucial part of immigration control. Rep. Eshoo is committed to finding ways to successfully incorporate this foreign talent into our economy to create jobs and innovations for the benefit of our nation.

Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 1275, the DREAM Act, which provides a pathway to citizenship to those young students of "good moral character" who were educated in the United States. The legislation also amends the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 to allow states to provide in-state tuition to illegal immigrant students if they meet certain requirements.

Rep. Eshoo is also concerned about the rising cost of citizenship applications for immigrants seeking to become legal U.S. citizens. With fees set to rise almost 80% this year, Rep. Eshoo has cosponsored H.R. 1379, the Citizenship Promotion Act. This bill directs Congress to appropriate funds to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) to bridge the gap between the current fees and the proposed increase.

Keeping Families Together

Too often families are torn apart by imprudent immigration law. Rep. Eshoo has consistently supported legislation to reunite and keep immigrant families together.

The V non-immigrant visa was introduced by the Legal Immigration Family Equity Act of 2000 and was made available to spouses or minor children of lawful permanent residents who were awaiting family-based immigrant visas. The V-visa was restricted to those who had applied for the immigrant visa on or before December 21, 2000 and had been waiting for approval for three or more years. The V-visa is no longer available. In the 109th Congress, Rep. Eshoo cosponsored legislation to renew the V non-immigrant visa, making it available to spouses or minor children of legal permanent residents who are awaiting family-based immigrant visas.

In the 110th Congress, Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 2221, the Uniting American Families Act of 2007, which applies the same standards and requirements to same-sex partners that are applicable to opposite-sex couples seeking to bring a foreign partner into the country.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Rep. Eshoo favors a comprehensive immigration reform plan. She's committed to passing reform legislation to reunite families, increase border security, set up an employment verification systems, create a guest worker program, increase the annual limit on H-1B visas, and create a pathway to citizenship.

The Senate is currently debating a comprehensive immigration package. The House may consider this legislation if it passes the Senate with bipartisan support.

Related Resources:

- USCIS Advisory Regarding Immigration Fraud and Proposed Immigration Reform Legislation (Spanish)

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