

Immigration Reform: It's Time for a Course Correction

February 27, 2013 | Blog |

VIEWPOINT TOPICS

- Immigration

RELATED PRACTICES

RELATED INDUSTRIES

The first two months of 2013 have seen a flurry of activity relating to immigration reform. President Obama is pushing for comprehensive reform as are powerful factions within both the Senate and the House. And the political will and rising tide of opinion in favor of reform are making for unusual bedfellows, as exemplified by the recent joint statement of principles from the American Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO.

But in this same timeframe, lawmakers anxious to change current immigration law to create new pathways for entrepreneurs and highly educated immigrants have introduced a number of bills designed for this purpose, including the Immigration Innovation (I²) Act of 2013 introduced by Senators Hatch, Klobuchar, Rubio and Coons and the Startup Act 3.0, introduced by Senators Moran, Warner and Coons. These bills contain many excellent provisions that make tremendous sense, addressing shortcomings and deficiencies in our current law. For example, the I² bill would significantly increase the H-1B cap and would exempt graduates of U.S. advanced degree programs from the cap. It would authorize employment for the spouses of H-1B workers and would make it easier for those workers to move from one company to another. It would also streamline the green card process and eliminate the enormous backlogs in the current system. The Startup Act 3.0 would provide a new and much-needed work visa for foreign entrepreneurs who can attract angel or venture funding to their new U.S. ventures.

Our immigration laws are so broken and outdated that only comprehensive reform will correct our course. And the lawmakers who have introduced bills such as I² and the Startup Act 3.0 clearly hope that their prescriptions for specific improvements will be incorporated into any final comprehensive bill. But should comprehensive reform prove elusive, at a minimum Congress should pass some version of these bills, to attract and retain the best and the brightest of our foreign students and entrepreneurs, and help to boost and strengthen the U.S. economy.

Authors