

I voted Yes on H.R. 6429, the STEM Jobs Act of 2012.

This legislation was previously voted on by the House in September 2012, but fell short of a two-thirds majority required under suspension of the rules. H.R. 6429 was brought up again today with minor policy changes under a rule requiring a simple majority vote for approval.

The STEM Jobs Act, of which I am an original cosponsor, would create a STEM Visa program under which foreign students that earn advanced degrees in the high-demand fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) at American universities could remain in our country to work in those fields. The program would provide 55,000 such visas annually, but would also eliminate the flawed "diversity" visa program so that the total number of legal immigrants to the U.S. is not changed by the bill. The diversity program distributes 55,000 visas each year through a random lottery process designed to increase immigration from countries that send relatively few immigrants to U.S., irrespective of those individuals' ability to productively contribute to the American economy.

Importantly, before a STEM graduate could obtain a visa, an employer would have to petition on their behalf, notify their state labor department, and that agency would then post the job listing for at least 30 days. This is meant to ensure that these foreign students are not taking jobs that could be adequately filled by Americans.

The updated version of this bill includes a provision allowing spouses and minor children of STEM visa holders to wait, but not work, in the U.S. for their green cards to become available – after they have spent one year abroad on the green card waiting list.

I am a strong supporter of cultivating the high-value, knowledge-based segment of our economy which is reliant on higher education in the STEM fields. Careers in these fields are directly related to greater innovation, economic growth and increased productivity. STEM workers earn roughly twice as much as non-STEM workers, and their rate of unemployment is half that of non-STEM peers.

Put simply, these are the kinds of workers we need now more than ever in our nation. They

create new products, start businesses and then hire workers and give them paychecks. While I am primarily focused on increasing opportunity for American students to succeed in STEM education, it is only right that we allow foreign STEM graduates to work in the U.S. and contribute to our economy after they graduate – rather than go home and compete against us.

The bill was approved by a vote of 245 – 139.