

President Donald J. Trump
Vice President Michael Pence
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
Senate Majority Leader Addison “Mitch” McConnell
Senate Minority Leader Charles “Chuck” Schumer

To America’s Leaders:

We represent a cross-section of America’s economy, now and into the future. As CEOs, deans of business schools across the country, and industry organizations, we have insights into what the U.S. economy needs now, and what it will need 10, 20, and 30 years into the future. We are helping to lead this generation of businesses and train the next generation of leaders who will succeed us.

We are also urgently concerned – we do not believe the U.S. has the high-skill talent it needs, nor does it have the capacity to train enough people with those skills. Without a substantial change in our approach, this deficit of skills in key fields will hinder economic growth.

The fact that our economy has created an estimated three million open STEM jobs is a positive. It speaks to the vibrancy and opportunities available in a healthy, growing economy. Yet the fact that those jobs are *unfilled* – and that the U.S. is not producing enough people with the skills to fill them – is not just a negative, it’s a crisis.

We are needlessly capping our growth and can do better.

America remains, as President Ronald Reagan put it, “a shining city upon a hill.” The best and brightest from all around the world want to come here, and their hard work and expertise make our economy stronger and more globally competitive. They want to provide American companies with insights into what approaches will succeed as these companies expand into foreign markets.

Yet a combination of our outdated laws, artificial regional and skills-based caps on immigration, and recent spikes in hostility are closing the door to the high-skilled immigrants our economy needs to thrive. For the first time since we started keeping track of these data, the past three years have seen a reduction in the number of foreign students studying in America’s universities and business schools. Every year, we turn away hundreds of thousands of high-skilled immigrants for no other reason than that they failed to win the H-1B lottery.

We cannot allow this dangerous negative trend to continue. As leaders committed to growth in America’s economy, we know that policy reforms could usher in immense benefits. These should include:

- Removing “per-country” visa caps, modernizing our visa processing system and reforming the H-1B visa program to make it possible for the most talented people to have a reasonable chance of gaining entry to the United States.
- Creating a “heartland” visa that encourages immigration to the regions of the United States that could most use the vitality of these talented individuals.

We can maintain the shimmer of our 'shining city upon a hill' that welcomes immigrants, as it has throughout history, to a land of opportunity.

We hope you agree, and we urge you to take these recommendations seriously.

We are confident that America's future economic success depends on it.

Sincerely,

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Andrew Ainslie, Simon Business School, University of Rochester

Homaira Akbari, President & CEO, AKnowlde Partners, LLC

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