



WORKFORCE AGENDA

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Background:

America's engineering industry needs more engineers in the talent pipeline to support a growing economy. ACEC advocates for a long-term strategy of STEM education investments and other policies that seek to inspire young people to pursue engineering careers, as well as a near-term strategy that better aligns the nation's immigration policies with economic growth. To advance this workforce agenda ACEC strongly supports expanding the number of employment-based visas and green cards that enable firms to hire global talent when qualified Americans are not available.

Key Points:

- ACEC's analysis of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) finds that we will need an additional 82,000 engineers and other professionals to deliver the projects funded under the new program.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the engineering workforce is currently at full employment and expected to grow by only six percent from 2020 to 2030, a pace that is insufficient to meet demand.
- The National Science Foundation reports that a significant portion of the existing engineering workforce is nearing retirement age and that current STEM education programs are not sufficiently reaching women and underrepresented minorities.
- The American Society for Engineering Education reports that in 2019 over half of engineering master's and doctoral degrees awarded by U.S. universities were earned by international students.
- H-1B visas have been capped at 85,000 visas annually since 2004, a policy that has failed to keep pace with the needs of a growing economy.
- There are 140,000 employment-based green cards available each fiscal year but hundreds of thousands have gone unused over the past 20 years because they were not processed by the end of the applicable fiscal year.

Requests:

- » Increase the number of H-1B visas.
- » Recapture unused green cards from past fiscal years.