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## A Better Idea for Green Jobs

It's crazy to educate the world's brightest and then deport them.

Washington has spent years trying to force-feed green jobs, to little good effect. So here's a better idea: Expand the number of green cards, as in the number of immigrant visas for foreign-born graduates of American universities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

This could even be bipartisan. President Obama this week praised the latest report from his jobs council that proposed more such visas. And this week Idaho Republican Raúl Labrador, a freshman of tea party provenance, introduced a bill in the House to do the same. The evidence is overwhelming that if we let these young people stay in America, rather than sending them home, they'll end up building new companies and tens of thousands of new jobs.

Consider the immigrant record on technology start-ups, which is summarized in a 2009 Kauffman Foundation study, "Foreign-Born Entrepreneurs." Vivek Wadhwa, a Duke University researcher, found that in 25% of "the U.S. science and technology companies founded from 1995 to 2005, the chief executive or lead technologist was foreign born." In 2005 those firms produced \$52 billion in revenue with 450,000 employees. In Silicon Valley alone, the percentage of immigrant-founded start-ups was 52%.

Mr. Wadhwa found that 74% of these entrepreneurs held advanced degrees, and three-quarters of those who had advanced degrees had concentrations in science, technology, engineering or math. "The vast majority of these company founders didn't come to the United States as entrepreneurs—52% came to study, 40% came to work," he writes. The study adds that in 2006 the inventors or co-inventors of more than 25% of U.S. patent applications were from foreign nationals residing in America.

None of this is news to American industry. "Innovation requires innovators," Darla Whitaker, a Texas Instruments senior vice president, told a House subcommittee last week. Many of the graduates her company recruits are foreign born. The long

wait for a green card, she said, is "frustrating for them, limits employer flexibility, and diminishes productivity." Many of them pack up and go home.

Here's another bureaucratic wrinkle: India and China have a disproportionate number of such science and engineering graduates, but U.S. law says that any one country can only tap 7% of the total green cards available. This has pushed many of the most attractive recruits to the back of the line. Yet Mr. Wadhwa reports that Indian immigrants founded 26% of immigrant-founded start-ups in Silicon Valley in 2005, which is more than the next four groups from Britain, China, Taiwan and Japan combined. The law's country limit means that the green card wait can be nine years for many Indians.

Mr. Labrador's bill would create a special green card category for science, technology, math and engineering master's and Ph.D. grads who have a job offer. There would be no quota caps, and company recruits would be fast-tracked through the visa process.

Opponents claim these foreigners steal jobs from Americans, but unemployment is low in industries that recruit these highly skilled workers. Everyone wishes more Americans studied science, engineering or math, but not enough do. For example, 55% of U.S. master's degrees and 63% of doctorates in electrical engineering go to foreign-born students. Mr. Labrador's bill would collect a fee from employers who sponsor these foreign-born recruits that will go to scholarships for American students.

Meantime, the U.S. has to compete for talent. "We're finding a lot of these graduates get job offers, but when they find out how long it will take them to get green cards they leave and go work in other countries where they become our competitors," Mr. Labrador says. The global competition for human capital is as fierce as it is for financial capital, and the U.S. can't afford to reject either one.