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An unnecessary layer of complication has been added to immigration reform

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Refreshingly here in Michigan, the topic of foreign-born workers in relations to jobs is fading as a right-versus-left issue. It's time the rest of the nation catches up.

As Gov. Rick Snyder wants to welcome 50,000 new immigrants to come live and work in Detroit by 2019, Congress continues to overreact to the topic of reform to the point where progress has been halted. With it comes new problems including questions of appeared systematic denial of skilled workers from specific countries have been raised in the media.

To begin, simply put, there are not enough U.S.-born workers possessing the adequate high-tech skill set that corporations need to fill vacant jobs. Skilled immigrants want to bring their talent to the U.S. but, because of a lack of reform, are forced to look at other countries to invest in. This fact stalls the economy.

One easy solution to fill vacant jobs in the U.S. is an increase in L-1B petitions to allow foreign-born workers into the U.S. for three months to seven years for employment. Increasing these visas would solve many problems for employers.

Unfortunately however, politics have clouded Congress yet again and solvable issues like visas for high-skilled documented immigrants have a new layer of controversy. Recent reports indicate the targeting of specific regions where L1-B visas are denied at staggering rates. For example, India has more English-speaking skilled workers than any other country outside of North America, yet the denial rate for L-1B petitions to transfer employees of Indian origin was 56 percent from 2012 through 2014 — compared to the average denial rate of 13 percent from all other countries.

In the entire examination of immigration reform, these high denial rates must force us to ask, why?

Here in Michigan, Snyder understands that more than 25 percent of all of the high-tech firms founded in the U.S. from 1995 to 2005 reported that at least one of their key founders was an immigrant — producing \$52 billion in sales and employing 450,000 workers in 2005.

Snyder also understands the reality that young talent is crucial to the economy as he embraces talent from across the globe. Michigan's international students want to stay here. Rather than be lured out to Silicon Valley where 52 percent of all the high-tech firms have at least one immigrant as a founder, Michigan's foreign-born students who use their student visa to work in the U.S. after graduation are nearly as likely as domestic students to stay, according to a Global Detroit study. If they stay, those enterprising grads are likely to start high-tech firms here in Michigan.

Allowing highly skilled workers — whether they are from India or Canada or beyond — is a benefit to our nationwide economy. In the entire conversation of immigration reform, this aspect should be easy to fix. It's time Congress stops making it complicated. Michigan is waiting.

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