

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

We are writing today in support of the State Department-managed J-Visa Summer Work Travel (SWT) program. This public diplomacy program has a long track record of success, engaging students from countries all over the world, including those key to U.S. national security interests. At a time when the values of the United States are misrepresented in many parts of the world this program plays an ever-increasing role to correct those impressions of America, expose international students to our culture and values, and give Americans the opportunity to learn about corners of the world to which they may never travel. In addition to these long-term benefits, many small businesses in our districts fill their seasonal labor shortages through the Summer Work Travel program. The SWT program does all this at no expense to American taxpayers.

The SWT program enables international students to afford to travel to the United States for a period of up to four months during their summer breaks. The work component that is built into the program model helps these exchange visitors defray their living and travel expenses by allowing them to accept temporary seasonal jobs in the U.S. and ensures a more diverse group of students can experience the U.S. first-hand.

A recent study shows the lack of enough seasonal employees is a problem for many American businesses. In fact, one quarter of surveyed employers state without SWT students to supplement their seasonal workforce, they cannot operate at capacity during peak season. This, in turn, will result in fewer hours, lower salaries, less benefits, and even job losses for their American employees. We appreciate the fact that the SWT program regulations contain provisions to ensure that exchange visitors do not displace American workers and commend the Department for the productive manner in which they continue to strengthen these protections.

We have also heard from local chambers of commerce that the SWT program benefits these businesses, enhances customers' experience and adds tremendous economic and cultural value to the communities in our Districts in which the SWT participants are hosted. These exchange students not only work in our local businesses, they also shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants and rent local accommodations. Their absence would mean real sacrifice for many small towns in reduced public services like emergency responders.

As the Administration reviews all visa programs, we urge you to work with stakeholders to continue to strengthen this valuable cultural exchange program which enriches and supports American communities across the country.



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Member of Congress



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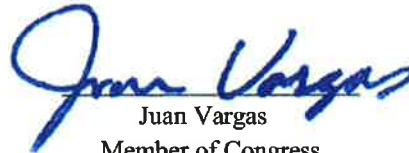
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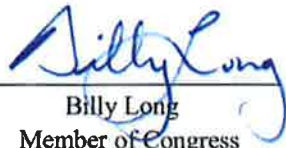
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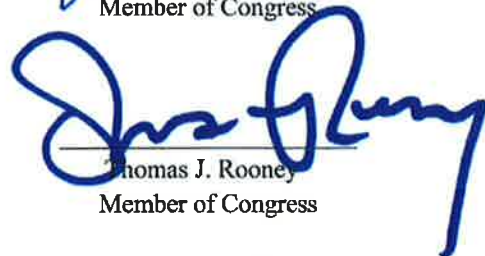


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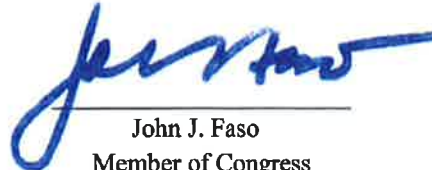

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