

## **Fact Sheet: Presidential Proclamation Suspending Certain Categories of J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**

On June 22, 2020, the White House issued a proclamation suspending some nonimmigrant visas effective June 24 through December 31, 2020, with the possibility of continuation. Potential modifications may also be periodically recommended (within 30 days and every 60 days thereafter) throughout its effective period. Section 2(b) of the proclamation details the J-1 visa suspensions, specifically for intern, trainee, teacher, camp counselor, au pair, and summer work travel programs. The Alliance opposes inclusion in the proclamation of international exchange programs and requests that the Administration use the 30-day review required by the proclamation to enable these programs to continue.

The U.S. Department of State oversees many educational and cultural exchange programs under the J-1 visa, which have a significant economic benefit to the United States, in addition to their public diplomacy and national security interests. Among these programs, the Exchange Visitor Program allows people from around the world to come to the U.S. and offset the cost of their cultural exchange through a work placement, regulated by the U.S. Department of State.

### **Cultural exchange programs positively contribute to the United States economy.**

Exchange Visitor Program participants support year-round American jobs in local communities. Participants also help support and create American jobs by enabling businesses to operate at full capacity and year-round. Without Exchange Visitor Program participants, many American host employers will have to cut back services to customers, reducing already diminished revenue, which could lead to lay-offs of American employees.\* These programs are important to American businesses as many host employers have unique needs, such as being located in rural, low population areas. Cultural exchange programs such as Camp Counselor, Intern and Trainee, and Summer Work Travel combined contribute more than \$1.2 billion to the economy each year.\*

**The Presidential proclamation will cost, not save, American jobs.** The impact from the pandemic alone is projected to result in losses to our economy of more than \$233 million and nearly 7,000 American jobs.\* The proclamation will very likely lead to an increase in layoffs among program sponsors in the United States, which will have a negative ripple effect throughout our economy.

**The Exchange Visitor Program addresses unique needs in the United States.** Au Pairs fill a unique need in the United States for families that are seeking live-in child care and cultural enrichment simultaneously. Intern and Trainee participants experience an individualized training and cultural exposure, while increasing their career readiness. Teacher exchanges are one small part of broader efforts to address well-documented teacher shortages in some districts, but is not intended — and does not in practice — shape

the U.S. teaching market. Camp Counselor and Summer Work Travel positions are typically in locations that have challenges, such as a limited local workforce for entry-level positions. By law, these positions do not displace American workers and must work side-by-side with Americans.

**The Exchange Visitor Program is a cultural exchange program.** On average, 88% of Exchange Visitor Program participants cite the cultural exchange component, not the work component, as the primary factor in taking part in the program.\* Exchange visitors develop a more positive view of the United States, maintain friendships here for years to come, and often come back for visits. As states and localities begin reopening their economies, reestablishing people-to-people diplomacy should be part of that effort for communities and host organizations.

**The Exchange Visitor Program supports United States national security interests.** Section 3(b) provides exceptions to the proclamation, with Section 3(b)(iv) noting a national interest exception as determined by the Secretary of State and Secretary of Homeland Security. Implementation of the national interest exception directs the Secretary of State, Secretary of Labor, and Secretary of Homeland Security to establish such exception standards, including for those who are critical to the diplomacy or national security of the United States, or are necessary to facilitate the immediate and continued economic recovery of the United States. Exchange programs should be exempt given their role in supporting our diplomatic and national security efforts, in addition to their economic benefits.

Many international exchange participants become community, business, and political leaders when they return home. 75% of cultural exchange participants, on average, developed a more positive opinion of the U.S. in general after their program experience.\* Their understanding and affinity for the United States supports our diplomatic efforts worldwide, which is especially important during challenging times.

Given that international exchange programs support our economy and national security, they should be exempt from the proclamation. We urge the Administration to support American jobs, as well as our foreign policy objectives.

*\*Please see <https://www.alliance-exchange.org/info-and-issues/> for EurekaFacts reports and fact sheets on Camp Counselor, Intern/Trainee, and Summer Work Travel programs, as well as on the economic impact of the pandemic.*