

**Testimony of
Phillip J. Ritter
Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Texas Instruments Incorporated
Before the Field Hearing of the Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship
Subcommittee of the
Senate Judiciary Committee
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Mr. Chairman: Thank you for inviting me to discuss an issue critical to the competitiveness of U.S. business – access to top talent.

American competitiveness is a top public policy priority for Texas Instruments. We support the President's American Competitiveness Initiative which calls for increased investments in basic research, making the R&D tax credit permanent, improving math/science education and ensuring better access to skilled professionals, including highly educated foreign nationals.

Your hearing today highlights this last item and the need to update and reform our deeply flawed U.S. immigration laws, specifically those pertaining to highly educated foreign professionals. We are advocates of change.

On that note, I want to thank you at the outset for your leadership on the SKIL Bill, legislation which we believe will go a long way in addressing these deficiencies. The United States benefits when foreign-born scientists, doctors, teachers, engineers and entrepreneurs live and work in this country. Your vision is moving us in that direction, and away from the disincentives which discourage irreplaceable foreign talent.

I would like to make three main points this morning:

- 1) The United States' long-term competitiveness and ability to innovate is tied to the intellectual brainpower of its workers, particularly the science and engineering workforce. Unfortunately, the U.S. is not producing enough American-born professionals in these fields to meet the demand.
- 2) We will always want to have access to the best talent in the world but building a domestic pipeline of science and engineering talent must be a national imperative.
- 3) Access to talent is not just about more H-1B visas. It is also about green card reform that ensures that foreign nationals can remain in the United States and build their careers here.

1) The United States' science and engineering workforce.

To the first point: Whether you cite Tom Friedman, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering indicators or a host of other studies and reports, the verdict is in: the U.S. faces significant challenges in developing, attracting and retaining its engineering and science workforce.

We know that more than half – and in some disciplines two thirds – of the advanced degrees awarded at U.S. universities in science and engineering are earned by foreign nationals. Due to a number of factors – including demographic shifts, interest, poor preparation, and lack of awareness of opportunities – we also know that fewer U.S. students are choosing to study in many of these fields. Finally, we note that U.S. high school students perform poorly in comparison to their international peers on math and science assessments.

Despite this grim reality, U.S. business must compete and succeed in the global market. For example, TI is highly dependent on electrical engineers in our design, manufacturing, R&D and sales operations. When we recruit at Texas schools, we find upwards of 70% of the masters and PhDs are awarded to foreign nationals. We need access to that talent, especially those that have been doing cutting edge nano-electronics research. So do our competitors. Let me tell you, there is a constant scramble for these people.

2) Building a domestic pipeline

Since the founding of this country, foreign-born immigrants have made significant contributions to virtually every aspect of the U.S. economy. That is especially true in the sciences. We will always want to tap the world's best and brightest, especially in our global economy. But there is no doubt that we must do more here in the U.S. to build an indigenous pipeline of talent. TI and many other high tech companies are focused on this issue.

In fact, our company's primary philanthropic and volunteer effort is in furthering and enhancing the education pipeline at all grades and levels. I would like to submit for the record a brief overview of our various programs and activities. One example is the Texas Engineering and Technical Consortium or TETC. It is a consortium of nine companies, 34 colleges and universities and the State of Texas, working together to increase the number of engineering and computer science graduates in Texas. We appreciate the support your office has given this program in helping secure federal funds to match the state and private funds. The total TETC program for 2005 is valued at more than \$16 million.

The federal government also clearly has a role in making math and science proficiency a national imperative. The President's Math Now, AP and Adjunct Teachers Programs are important tools. TI has been a long-time supporter of the AP Incentive Program that has yielded impressive results in increasing the number of students taking and passing AP classes.

We have worked with the local Richardson Independent School system to close the achievement gap between minority and Caucasian students – while increasing overall academic achievement – and we’re starting to see some positive results. In fact, this could serve as a model for the Math Now program. Other existing programs at NSF and the Department of Education, indeed all across the federal government, can also be refocused and leveraged to address this pipeline challenge. We support these efforts and urge Congress to act on them as quickly as possible.

3) Green card reform.

As you know, the government has already exhausted the H-1B visa quotas for the next fiscal year as well as the additional 20,000 visas available for students graduating with advance degrees from U.S. universities. There is no question that more visas are needed. We strongly support the provisions in the SKIL bill that raise the H-1B cap and exempt altogether professionals who have earned a masters degree or higher.

Equally important are the bill’s provisions that update the employment based-visa - or green card – program. This will provide additional visas generally and exempt individuals with advanced degrees from U.S. universities and their immediate family members from the quota.

A majority of scientists and engineers earning advanced degrees from U.S. universities are foreign-born. Many of them wish to stay and establish their careers and families in the United States. Texas Instruments seeks green cards for virtually all of the employees we have hired on H-1B visas. And we begin the process as soon as they are hired.

Unfortunately, unreasonable caps, unrealistic allotments and extreme administrative delays can hold these people in legal and professional limbo for years. Imagine graduating with a PhD in electrical engineering from UT Austin and having your career opportunities stymied for 5-7 years because you can’t get your green card. Without a green card these professionals are unable to seek promotions, move to a new city or change jobs. The result is that more professionals are opting to return home or take jobs in other countries, even if they would rather stay in the United States. This uncertainty also reduces the flexibility of the employer to deploy resources as needed.

In short, the goals and objectives of the SKIL Bill are critically important. Mr. Chairman, I want to again thank you for your leadership and urge you strongly to secure some relief on this front this year. I am aware time is running out, but the need is clear. Thank you for your consideration.