

CHINA BRIEF

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MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT

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COURTESY OF GARY CHODOROW

My Personal Views on Immigration Reform

The president and Congress have signaled an interest in comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) legislation. It's about time.

Our current immigration system is badly broken and in dire need of a top-to-bottom overhaul.

Here's just one example. Assume a US company has an immediate opening for a job requiring a master's degree or PhD. Assume that company has proven to the US Department of Labor that it has recruited in good faith but unsuccessfully for any minimally-qualified US worker interested in taking the job at the prevailing wage. Still, there's a *10-year waiting list* in the EB-2 category for a Chinese national to enter the US and fill that job.

Such backlogs make it difficult for employers to attract and retain the best and brightest global talent, undermining American competitiveness.

In my opinion, it is important for, not just business-related immigration reform, but also comprehensive immigration reform. Congress is unlikely to tackle one problem without the other. (You can imagine opponents' arguments that it's wrong to allow more legal immigrants in before we fix the illegal immigration problem.)

CIR inevitably will involve legalization of some subset of undocumented immigrants who meet certain conditions (e.g., knowledge of English, payment of taxes, absence of a criminal record, payment of a fine). I recognize that this is a potential political minefield. But it's the only solution I see.

The status quo is unacceptable. Right now, undocumented immigrants live in the shadows. Unscrupulous employers may disregard wage, safety, and other labor laws. Undocumented immigrants who are crime victims or witnesses may not call the police for fear of deportation.

By requiring these people to come out of the shadows, register with the government, go through security checks and earn the privilege of permanent legal status, CIR can restore the rule of law in our workplaces and communities.

And restoring the rule of law is the best way to ensure public support for business-related immigration.

Hometown: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Time in Beijing: Five years

Position/company: Attorney, Frederick W. Hong Law Offices

Job Duties: Represent companies and individuals on US immigration law matters, including applying for US temporary visas (B, H-1B, L-1, O-1, etc.) and immigrant visas (through investment, employment and family).

Little known fact about me: My first job after college was as a ranger for the US National Park Service in Bandelier, NM, and Mesa Verde, CO.

AmCham-China involvement: Co-chair, Visa Committee. The committee's main focus is to advocate for transparent and efficient US visa policies so that employees, customers and partners of AmCham-China companies can travel to the US for meetings, conferences, training and work.