



Press Release

The STEM Brain Drain: Lifting the Immigration Cap on STEM Ph.D.s

PAULINA ENCK | JUNE 1, 2022

As the Department of Defense (DoD) ramps up its efforts to bolster U.S. cybersecurity in response to increasing cyberattacks on U.S. systems, the agency will require a larger pool of high-skilled workers with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) credentials to combat these threats. In a new insight, AAF's Douglas Holtz-Eakin and Whitney Appel explore the potential impact of the America COMPETES Act provision and similar proposals that would lift the cap on the number of highly skilled STEM-focused Ph.D. immigrants who are allowed permanent residency in the United States.

Join us today, June 1, at 12:00 p.m. on Capitol Hill for an in-person panel event on this issue. [Register here!](#)

Key points:

- The Russian invasion of Ukraine and rising cyberattacks have increased concerns over high-tech threats to U.S. national security, especially cybersecurity; meanwhile, as DoD steps up its cybersecurity efforts in response, the agency may face a shortage of the highly skilled STEM workers it will need to counter these threats.
- A specific provision in the House-passed America COMPETES Act would allow non-citizens with a qualified STEM Ph.D. to bypass any green card backlogs and per-country limits, giving them a direct pathway to U.S. permanent residency—which is typically required for DoD employment.
- This specific provision alone could provide DoD with enough highly skilled workers to support current STEM hiring rates for the next three years.

[Read the analysis](#)