



Legislation would treat highly-skilled immigrants from India more fairly

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In the Aug. 31 Miami Herald, Sen. Rick Scott made inaccurate statements about the Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act (S.386). Scott, indeed, is “the only senator holding it up,” but not for the reasons he stated.

This bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support and has the support of 99 senators because it solves a terrible humanitarian crisis. According to the Congressional Research Service, more than 1 million people live in the United States who are stuck in a 195-year green-card line because a 1950s law restricts the issuance of green cards based solely on a person’s country of origin.

Under current law, immigrants from more than 190 countries can obtain an employment-based green card in less than a year, while highly skilled immigrants from India are banned from doing so and can only remain here on temporary visas. While on these temporary visas, they cannot change jobs (regardless of how abusive their employer is) or travel abroad for funerals or visit sick relatives without losing their immigration status. Their children will become illegal when they turn 21 through no fault of their own, and they cannot start companies or develop patents.

The Fairness for High Skilled Immigrants Act says that country of origin no longer can be a basis to discriminate against individuals seeking employment-based green cards. That principle of non-discrimination already is enshrined in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, but not in U.S. immigration law.

Scott claims, without evidence, that the bill will eliminate per-country limits at the expense of American workers. However, the opposite is true. The CATO Institute recently issued a report based on Department of Labor data that said that the current law depresses the average wage by \$11,592 and attracts immigrants with lower levels of education than what will occur under the new law.

Second, the assertion that ending the per-country caps would hurt trade, tourism and transportation also is false. Under a new compromise reached by Sens. Mike Lee and Richard Durbin, any company that wants to sponsor a foreign worker can still do so the exact same way

they do now and, while that worker awaits their green card, they can remain in the United States and work for their employer. They can even change jobs and travel abroad (which Indian workers cannot currently do).

There is simply no remaining policy reason for Scott to continue to inflict immense suffering to thousands of Floridians (including doctors, researchers and engineers) whose lives are devoid of hope. We hope he will listen to reason.