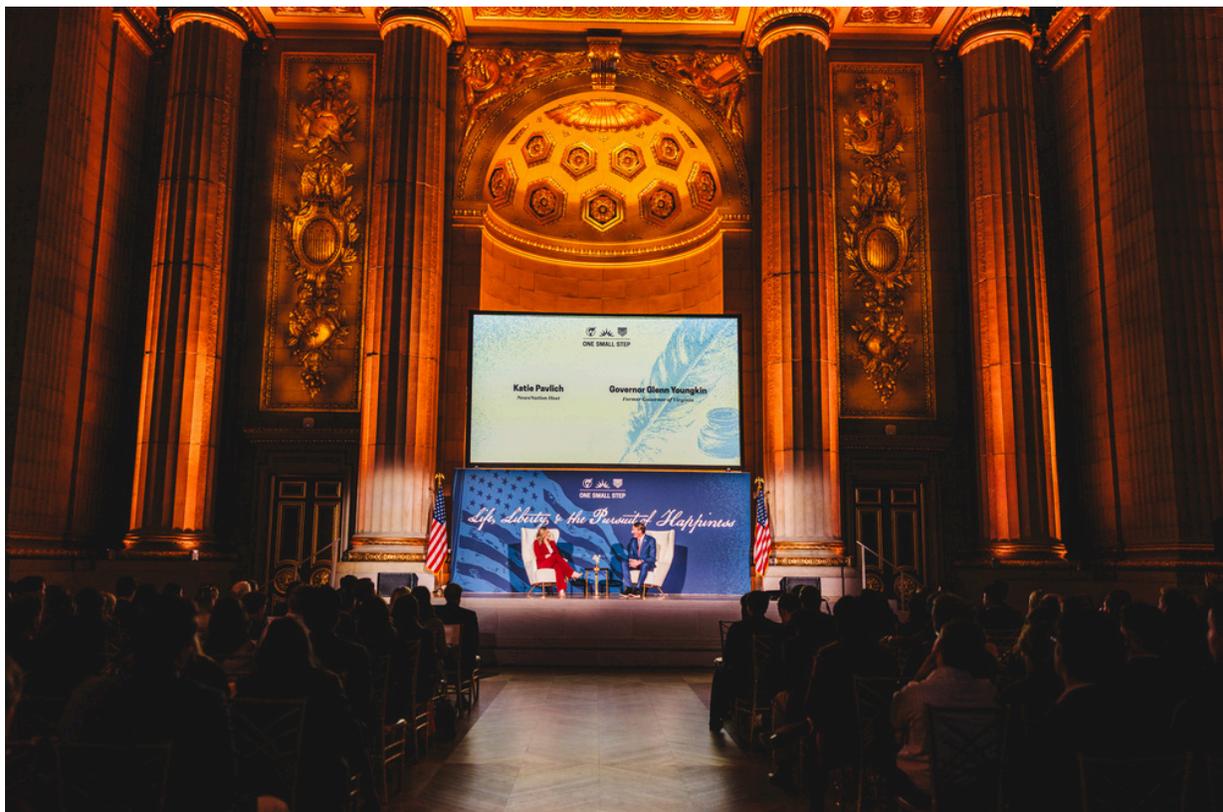




ONE SMALL STEP

As we celebrate our country's 250th anniversary, it is essential that we recapture and revitalize what has made our nation the greatest ever — a belief in the potential of individuals, regardless of parentage, and an understanding that prosperity comes from voluntary cooperation and local action, not top-down mandates. To lead the 21st century, America must quickly retake its status as the destination of choice for the world's best talent.

By applying our founding values to every part of our immigration system and society at large, we can strengthen America's competitiveness and see it achieve its full potential.





PILLAR 2: STRENGTHENING AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS

GOOD NEWS:

A secure border makes immigration better for everyone. And AFP's "Pillar I: Secure Border and Ports" provided a framework for securing the border that Congress has begun to adapt.

THE PROBLEM:

America is stuck with an immigration system built for yesterday's economy.

HOW IT STARTED:

America formed on the revolutionary idea that all men are created equal and capable of greatness. Our principles of liberty and self-governance have long rewarded those who work hard, tap into their talents, and discover better ways of doing things. These ideals have empowered countless Americans to make this country the greatest the world has ever seen, and have attracted to our shores the world's most ambitious people seeking to contribute to and join in our prosperity.

America represented a new order: one based on individual rights and shared progress, not leadership determined by birth and top-down control.

HOW IT'S GOING:

Much of our economy is burdened by high taxes, barriers to entry, and regulations from unelected bureaucrats.

Our outdated immigration system, built on central planning, fails to protect American interests, stifles economic potential, encourages offshoring, and incentivizes illegal immigration, making it difficult to enforce a system based on the rule of law. It is also a national security vulnerability.

It is often easier to bring over one's sibling than it is to bring over a talented worker. While the red tape piles up, China is taking notice of our gaps and aggressively recruiting talent so that we cannot. Congress should work on modernizing our immigration laws to strengthen national security and optimize the system to meet the demands of our evolving economy.





BUILDING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION OR MISSED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES?

Can you imagine a world without Zoom? Well, that was almost a reality. Zoom's founder, Eric Yuan, applied for an H-1B visa eight times and was rejected every single time.

He finally procured an H-1B visa on his ninth attempt. And then 14 years later, he created Zoom. Imagine how many more successful companies we would have with a system based on market demand, rather than a lottery.

Meet Sandeep Maganti, a 27-year-old man who created a million-dollar company in the US. Our broken immigration system forced him out.

After graduating from Arizona State University, Sandeep and a US citizen co-founded a million-dollar company, REVR, which employed another two U.S. citizens. REVR used an algorithm Sandeep and his co-founder built together to help real estate investors predict rent prices. Unfortunately, he was not selected three times in the H-1B lottery, and has since sold his company and returned to India.

Sandeep had plans to scale REVR into multiple states and hire about 50-60 new workers. Instead, he is back in India where he is building a world class AI healthtech company focused on applying AI to longevity and preventive healthcare on a global scale. A self-petitioning visa would have kept his talent and job-creating capabilities where they belong — here, in the United States.

Meet Laurens Van Beek, a talented software developer who was forced to self-deport from America due to our broken immigration system.

Laurens entered the US as a derivative on his parents' E-2, temporary investor's visa. He aged out of his derivative status when he turned 21, so he obtained a student visa. Because of his bachelor's degree in computer science, Laurens was permitted to work in the U.S. under Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Occupational Practical Training (colloquially referred to as "STEM OPT") for three years post-graduation. Each year, he applied for an H-1B visa, but the lottery failed him every time.

Forced to self-deport, he ended up in Belgium. Visiting from there, he testified before the Senate Budget Committee on September 13, 2023, about the injustices our broken immigration system imposes on hardworking people who are American in all but status. As he warned at the end of his testimony: "For the United States to continue as a global leader, we cannot afford to squander the talents of people like me, who have been shaped by American values and are ready to give back to the country that raised us. I am, and will always be, an American at heart — even if the paperwork tells a different story."



CONGRESS SHOULD:

Let the Market Work

Immigrants should be selected based on their desirability in the marketplace — not a lottery where winners must comply with bureaucratic, top-down labor requirements. As such, Congress should scrap the H-1B program and replace it with a skilled worker visa.

Congress will set the overall quota, with a mechanism that allows it to respond to market forces. Instead of a random lottery, it should prioritize applications based on salary and location. After that, it should sit back and let the market take over. This means allowing people to easily change positions with their current employer and change jobs (both of which currently involve a lot of time, paperwork, and money), or even start their own company.

Let Entrepreneurs Innovate

Our entrepreneurial spirit is what sets America apart from every other country in the world. We need to encourage, not restrict this. Congress should allow immigrants to self-petition if they meet certain salary requirements, with a mechanism in place to adjust the minimum salary over time.

Let People Earn Their Residency

Our current country quotas, set in 1990, punish people based on the accident of birth. Let's reward people based on their actual achievements. As with self-petitioning, Congress can set minimum salary/firm market value (for entrepreneurs) and length of stay requirements for residency applicants. Even a decade's stay would be preferable to the current decades-long wait many skilled workers must endure.

Let the States Decide

The Heartland Visa, proposed by the Economic Innovation Group, would permit counties that fit a certain economic profile to opt in to a skilled immigration visa program. By allowing counties to continually vote on whether they want to participate, the Heartland Visa provides local control over immigration levels to those closest to the situation.

Local control also allows states or counties to impose certain cultural requirements, like an English language and/or civics test. They may even require that immigrants pay into a worker's fund for unemployed Americans. Again, localities, not far-off bureaucrats, dictate what works best for them.