

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program Talking Points

Background

- As reported in the [Wall Street Journal](#), an administration working group led by White House staff is seeking to eliminate a majority of privately-funded J1 Visitor Exchange Programs. Five cultural exchange programs – Summer Work Travel, Camp Counselor, Intern and Trainee, and Au Pair – are slated for elimination.
- Shutting down the J1 Program is ostensibly part of a broader effort to “protect the interests of U.S. workers” under the Buy American, Hire American (BAHA) Executive Order, which was issued by the Administration in April.
- There are reports that the White House interagency group focused on shutting down J1s is led by Senior Advisor, Stephen Miller.

General Talking Points

- At a time of economic and diplomatic uncertainty, an administration working group led by White House staff is seeking to eliminate programs that have long-term benefits to both our position in the world and our economy. These privately-funded programs operate at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer.
- **If eliminated, it will be a huge economic blow to thousands of American businesses** that will be forced to dramatically reduce hours of operation due to a lack of employees, resulting in the shutdown of portions of their businesses, and ultimately, the laying-off of year-round American employees due to lost revenue.
- The U.S. economy will take a substantial hit. It’s estimated that J1 visa holders in the Summer Work Travel program alone **contribute more than \$500 million into the economy each year.**
- **Fundamentally, the J1 is a cultural exchange program—and those intended exchange goals are being achieved.** International participants come here to learn about U.S. culture, strengthen their English skills, and make personal connections to Americans. According to a recent report, 76 percent of SWT participants have a higher overall regard for the United States after the program; a statistic that is consistent with State Department reports of cultural exchange programs.
- **These programs have broad bipartisan and overwhelming business support.** Presidents Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama made these programs a hallmark of their administrations. In fact, Bush dramatically increased cultural exchange

response to the September 11 attacks as a way to show global unity and acceptance.

- In [recent letters to Secretary of State Tillerson, Members of Congress—17 in the U.S. Senate and 33 in the House of Representatives—urged him to oppose making changes to the J1 program](#). Preserving it will benefit American businesses, the economy, and the country's image worldwide at a time when the U.S. favorability rating worldwide is below 50 percent.
- **We urge the Trump administration to reject this dangerous approach to foreign policy.** We also call on supporters of cultural exchange in Congress to add their strong voices to the fight to save these critical public diplomacy tools from people who would put our nation's national security at risk and harm local communities.

Summer Work Travel

- J1 participants experience American culture through their interactions at work, on their own during non-work hours, and through organized activities.
- **SWT students do not displace American workers.** To the contrary, this program creates and sustains American jobs. The infusion of SWT students enables our businesses to stay open longer and at greater scale. And they enable us to employ more Americans and keep more Americans on year-round payrolls.
- **Cutting Summer Work Travel will devastate my business.** I will be forced to [depending on applicability]:
 - Reduce my hours of operation
 - Close portions of my business
 - Lay off year-round American employees
 - Possibly even shut down my facilities
- **SWT students supplement our American employees.** SWT students help us surge our operations during peak season [if applicable: especially in remote, underpopulated locations]. They also help us fill the critical labor gap in our shoulder seasons when American students are back in school.
- A recent study of SWT host employers like us supports this:
 - **97 percent said they have more seasonal jobs than they can fill, even after hiring as many Americans as possible and J1 SWT students too**
 - 51 percent of employers said labor shortages and lack of available American staff were their most important reason for participating in the program
 - The labor shortage issue is being greatly exacerbated by record low

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unemployment, with 50 percent of the country falling under 4 percent

- J1 participants contribute significantly to the economy (through program fees, travel, housing, and entertainment).
 - \$500+ million: estimated contribution of SWT participants to the U.S. economy in 2016 (roughly \$5,300 per participant)

Camp Counselor

- J1 participants experience American culture through their interactions at work, on their own during non-work hours, and through organized activities.
- **Cutting the Camp Counselor program will devastate my camp.** I will be forced to [depending on applicability]:
 - Reduce the number of young American campers I can serve
 - Close portions of my facilities
 - Lay off my American employees
 - Disappoint hundreds/thousands of American families who send us campers, which will increase the pressure on two income households to find other enriching summer experiences for their children
- **The J1 international Camp Counselor program is enormously popular with our campers and our campers' families.** Our international counselors are celebrities at our camp and the kids absolutely love learning from them about their home countries and cultures. This program is a huge selling point for our camp.
- **Sleepaway camps, which rely heavily on J1 counselors, are an important economic driver for many parts of the country.**
 - Without them, my/these camp(s) would be devastated
- Americans with the proper camper focus and basic skill sets easily find camp jobs. International counselors supplement our American counselors; they don't displace them. International counselors:
- Fill out counselor positions I'm unable to find Americans for, [if applicable: especially in our remote location]
- [If applicable] Bring special talents, hobbies, and skills [such as. . .] that are not commonly held in the United States

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Intern/Trainee

- J1 participants experience American culture through their interactions at work, on their own during non-work hours, and through organized activities.
- **Cutting intern/trainee programs will damage my ability to do business.** Specifically, it will damage my ability to:
 - Create new business abroad
 - Expand into new international markets
 - Train my American staff to create new business in international markets
- **International interns and trainees support my business interests,** [if applicable: at no cost, because they are unpaid]. They help me to:
 - Train my American staff on overseas markets and opportunities
 - Train my American staff on business and cultural practices overseas, giving them better ability to create new business for us
 - Create new partnerships with our interns and trainees once they return home, leading to new business opportunities
- **The intern and trainee programs are good for U.S. diplomacy and security.**
 - The program creates leaders and partners for the future
 - It creates a crop of young business leaders around the world who will move into positions of leadership and who truly understand America and how to do business with us