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AMERICAN HINDU COALITION MEETS
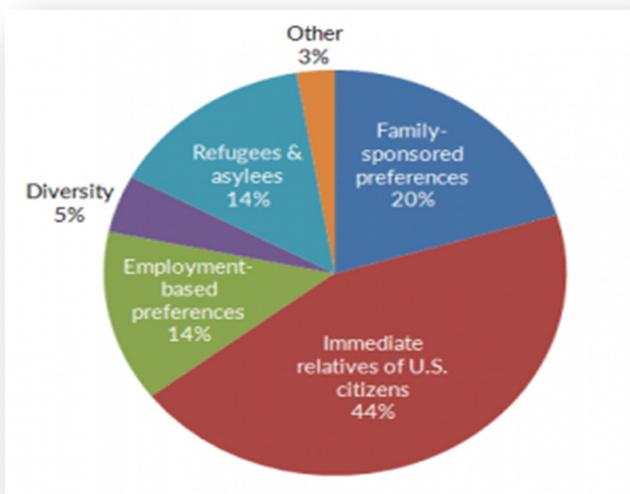## WITH WHITE HOUSE TO DISCUSS MERIT BASED IMMIGRATION

Washington DC – September 13, 2019 – The American Hindu Coalition (AHC) leadership met at the White House with Theo Wold, Special Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and Emily Newman, Policy Advisor, Office of Innovation, to discuss a "merit-based" system for Green Cards issuance that was first announced by President Trump at a Rose Garden ceremony on May 16, 2019. AHC leadership included Sue Ghosh Stricklett, Manikya Lakhsmi Linga, and Rao Linga.

AHC received a special briefing on the architecture of a legislative proposal that the White House plans to submit to Congress if the Republicans regain control of the House, retain control of the Senate and the White House, which looks increasingly likely. AHC was able to provide guidance on Indian American voters for whom merit-based issuance of Green Cards is a priority concern.

President Trump stated (May 16, 2019): ""Every year, we admit 1.1 million immigrants as permanent legal residents. These green card holders get lifetime authorization to live and work here and a five-year path to American citizenship. … Currently, 66 percent of legal immigrants come here on the basis of random chance. They're admitted solely because they have a relative in the United States. And it doesn't really matter who that relative is. Another 21 percent of immigrants are issued either by random lottery, or because they are fortunate enough to be selected for humanitarian relief. … We're not able to give preference to a doctor, a researcher, a student who graduated number one in his class from the finest colleges in the world … We're not able to make those incredible breakthroughs. If somebody graduates top of their class from the best college, sorry, go back to your country. We want to keep them here.

Source: Department of Homeland Security, 2015 *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.

Companies are moving offices to other countries because our immigration rules prevent them from retaining highly skilled and … totally brilliant people. We discriminate against genius. We discriminate against brilliance. … Some of the most skilled students at our world-class universities are going back home … Only 12 percent of legal immigrants are selected based on skill or based on merit. In countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand — and others — that number is closer to 60 and even 70 and 75 percent, in some cases. The biggest change we make is to increase the proportion of highly skilled immigration from 12 percent to 57 percent, and we'd like to even see if we can go higher."

AHC has learned that the merit-based program will eliminate or significantly limit the following categories: diversity, family-sponsored preferences, immediate relatives of US citizens preferences (i.e. except for spouses and minor children of US citizens and permanent resident aliens), and refuges and aslyee preferences. A new program - "Build America Visa" – will significantly expand the employment-based green-card categories to include immigrants who possess extraordinary talent, professionals and those in specialized vocations, and those with exceptional academic achievement. In this selection system, applicants would be allotted points for: youth; having a valuable skill; having an offer of employment; having an advanced degree;

planning to create jobs in America; and earning higher wages. New immigrants would also need to demonstrate financial self-sufficiency, learn English, and pass a civics exam prior to admission. The program will likely eliminate the current country caps.

AHC member surveys shows that:

1. The "Build America Visa" expansion of employer preference categories for green cards is popular among Indian Americans
2. A priority concern for Indian American households is the easing of the green card back log for the employment preference category
3. Immigration from India is primarily through temporary work visas in all categories; overwhelming majority are high-skilled and professional [engineers, doctors, scientists, professors, tech professionals]

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