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H-1B Hearing Begins Formal Visa Reform Debate in the House

Alexandria, VA, April 5, 2011 - Last week, the Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement of the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing entitled "H-1B Visas: Designing a Program to Meet the Needs of the U.S. Economy and U.S. Workers." In addition to being in attendance, the TechServe Alliance Government Affairs team met with key Congressional staff in advance of the hearing to press our industry's interests.

Testimony was offered by Donald Neufeld, Associate Director of Service Center Operations at USCIS, Bo Cooper, Partner at Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP, Ron Hira, Associate Professor of Public Policy at Rochester Institute of Technology, and Bruce Morrison, Chairman of Morrison Public Affairs Group. Though a wide array of issues surrounding the program was discussed during the hearing, some testimony was specific to the staffing industry.

Bruce Morrison, a former Chairman of the Subcommittee and now a lobbyist in private practice stated, "I don't think staffing as a way of participating in providing goods and services is a bad thing. The bad thing is when there is a model that doesn't participate in the American workforce. Providing staffers in a staffing model, as opposed to direct employment model, those are choices employers can legitimately make and there are reasons for using both." In contrast to staffing, Morrison criticized the use of the H-1B for "knowledge transfer" by the large offshore firms, a term Ron Hira described as requiring an American worker to train a foreign worker as his or her replacement. In many cases, the job is subsequently moved overseas.

The hearing also addressed a number of other aspects of the H-1B program, including the green card system and USCIS approach to fraud investigations.

"We see this hearing as a first formal step in Congressional efforts that may result in substantial modifications to the H-1B visa program. As the voice of the industry on Capitol Hill, we will continue to ensure the IT staffing industry's interests are being vigorously represented as the debate on the H-1B program moves forward," stated Mark Roberts, CEO of TechServe Alliance.

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ABOUT TechServe Alliance

TechServe Alliance is a collaboration of IT services firms, clients, consultants and suppliers dedicated to advancing excellence and ethics within the IT services industry. Hundreds of IT staffing, IT solutions and IT consulting firms and tens of thousands of affiliated professionals, count on TechServe Alliance to keep their leadership informed, engaged and connected. TechServe Alliance serves as the voice of the industry before the policymakers and the national and trade press. By providing access to the knowledge and best practices of an entire industry and tapping the "collective scale" of hundreds of companies, TechServe Alliance supports its members in the efficient delivery of best-in-class IT services for clients and exceptional professional opportunities for every IT consultant.