

**Statement of Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Chair, Subcommittee on  
Immigration and Citizenship**

**In support of H.R. 565  
Advancing Mutual Interests and Growing Our Success (AMIGOS)  
Act**

**October 23, 2019**

Mr. Chairman, I speak today in support of H.R. 565. Introduced by my friend and colleague from Rhode Island, Mr. Cicilline, this bipartisan bill will allow Portuguese nationals who wish to engage in substantial trade and investment activities in the United States to obtain temporary E-1 and E-2 visas for themselves and for essential business personnel.

But before these visas can be issued, U.S. nationals who wish to engage in similar activities in Portugal must receive reciprocal treatment. Simply put, this bill will make it easier for Portuguese nationals to invest, facilitate trade, and create jobs in the United States, while providing similar opportunities for Americans. This is a proposal that we can all embrace.

The United States became Portugal's largest trading partner outside the European Union in 2015. Bilateral trade between our countries is growing at a rapid pace, nearly doubling from \$4.2 billion in 2015 to \$8 billion in 2018.

Unlike most European Union countries, the United States and Portugal did not have a bilateral trade and investment treaty in place before Portugal joined the EU. Now, despite being one of our longest-standing allies and closest economic partners, Portugal is one of only 5 EU countries whose citizens are not eligible for E visas. H.R. 565 will help change that.

Currently, there are more than 130 U.S. companies operating in Portugal and more than 100 Portuguese companies in the United States. Collectively, these companies cover industries as diverse as technology, financial services, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, and textiles. With the implementation of reciprocal trade and investment-based visa programs, these existing companies will flourish, and new business opportunities will proliferate.

For example, an E-2 visa would allow a software developer from Portugal to run a start-up tech company in the northeast corridor. It would allow a Portuguese clean energy company to invest in a research facility in Virginia. An E-1 visa would allow a Portuguese winemaker to setup a business to sell their wine in the United States and import wines from Sonoma to Portugal.

The E visa programs have played an essential role in U.S. foreign policy for decades, with some bilateral treaties and agreements that form the foundation of the programs dating as far back as the 1800s. The E visas have helped create the America we know today—one where the entrepreneurial spirit is welcomed, and our country is rewarded with economic prosperity.

This bill will only improve our economies and strengthen our ties with an historical ally. With that, I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.