

Interview with Dr. Raj Vayyavur, Chair of Computer Society & Consultants Network: Insights from the Recent IEEE USA Congressional Visit, April 11th, 2024.

Question:

Before we delve into the details of your recent participation in the IEEE USA congressional visit, could you please take a moment to introduce yourself? Specifically, could you tell us about your role within the IEEE New Hampshire section, as well as your interests and passions within the field?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Absolutely. I'm Dr. Raj Vayyavur, Chair of the Computer Society and Consultants Network within the IEEE New Hampshire section and active Senior Member of IEEE. In this role, I oversee various initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration and professional development among members. My interests lie in leveraging technology to address societal challenges and promote innovation. I'm particularly passionate about advocating for policies that advance science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and support the growth of the technology sector.

Question:

Could you share your reflections on your recent participation in the IEEE USA congressional visit in Washington, DC?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Certainly! First of all, Thank you to IEEE New Hampshire board for selecting me for this event. The IEEE USA congressional visit was a remarkable experience, one that I am grateful to have been a part of. It was an honor to represent our IEEE community alongside other professionals from diverse backgrounds and regions, all united in our commitment to advancing technology and science policy. Also, thank you to Public Consulting Group, for supporting me in participating in this effort. They recognized this endeavor as a volunteer effort and important to societal causes.

Question:

What was the main purpose of the visit, and who did you engage with during the discussions?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

The primary goal of the visit was to advocate for key policy initiatives, particularly emphasizing the importance of AI, science and technology, and the STEM Talent Act. We had the opportunity to engage directly with legislators and

policymakers, including senators or their staff, to discuss these critical issues and their implications for our fields and our country.

Question:

How did you find the experience of advocating for these policy initiatives?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Advocating for these policy initiatives was both rewarding and challenging. It was inspiring to see the level of expertise and dedication among my fellow IEEE professionals, and the opportunity to contribute to such meaningful discussions was truly invaluable. At the same time, navigating the intricacies of policy advocacy required careful preparation and effective communication to ensure our message was heard and understood.

Interviewer:

What were some key insights or takeaways from the discussions you had during the visit?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

One key insight that emerged from the discussions was the importance of collaboration and collective action in shaping policy decisions. Our ability to come together as a community and advocate for our shared interests is essential for driving meaningful change. Additionally, it was evident that policymakers value input from experts in the field, highlighting the significance of our role in informing and influencing policy discussions.

Question:

Dr. Vayyavur, during your participation in the IEEE USA congressional visit, you advocated for several important policy initiatives. Could you share which topic you stressed the most and why it resonated with you?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Certainly. Among the various topics we discussed, one that I stressed and particularly resonated with me was the STEM Talent Act. This act aims to support a strong high-skilled visa system that allows talented and innovative workers to become U.S. citizens. This topic holds a special place in my heart as an immigrant from India.

Question:

Could you elaborate on why the STEM Talent Act is significant to you personally?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Absolutely. As someone who has experienced the challenges of navigating the U.S. immigration system firsthand, I understand the importance of addressing the issues faced by high-skilled immigrants. In fact, I recently published a book titled "Dreams Deferred by Law: The Age-of Crisis Among the Children of Legal Immigrants in America," which delves into these challenges.

Question:

What specific challenges do high-skilled immigrants face within the current immigration system? Tell me more about your book.

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

One of the primary challenges is the lengthy backlog within the immigration system, particularly for immigrants from countries like India. Over 1.8 million highly skilled individuals and their families are stuck in the backlog, waiting decades for permanent residency. The outdated nature of the legal immigration system in America exacerbates these delays, preventing talented individuals from fully contributing to the workforce and society. It also impacts innocent children of legal immigrants, known as "documented dreamers." These children spend the majority of their lives in America but age out when they turn 21 years old, forcing them to self-deport or transition to a student F1 visa and restart the immigration journey, which can take several more decades. The hidden suffering and struggle is truly difficult to express in words. My book is all about shedding light of these innocent children and advocating for empathy towards them. The book is available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Dreams-Deferred-Law-Immigrant-Children/dp/B0CZJBH4HX>

Question:

Looking ahead, what do you believe are the next steps for advancing these policy initiatives?

Dr. Raj Vayyavur:

Moving forward, it will be essential to maintain momentum and continue advocating for these policy initiatives at both the local and national levels. This may involve further engagement with legislators, as well as outreach to other stakeholders and the broader public to build support for our priorities. Additionally, staying informed and proactive in monitoring policy developments will be crucial to ensuring our voices are heard in the decision-making process



