

# The Wall Street Journal

## Review & Outlook

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### The Sessions Complaint

#### Defining down the U.S. science and tech job market.

Jeff Sessions's media spear-carriers say we misrepresented the Senator in [our April 25 editorial](#) taking on his claims that Americans with college degrees in science and tech can't find jobs in their fields. Their complaint doesn't help his case.

One of the Alabama Republican's favorite talking points is that 74% of Americans with science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) degrees—he says about 11 million Americans—are working in non-STEM jobs. The Census data on which this is based also say only 3.8 million Americans with degrees in these subjects hold STEM jobs. He cites these figures to show that foreigners are stealing American jobs and so the U.S. should sharply reduce immigration even by skilled workers.

The problem is that these numbers for STEM jobs are based on definitions that are artificial and narrow. We cited a new study by the [National Foundation for American Policy](#) pointing out that, under this definition, people like Apple CEO [Tim Cook](#), or a Nobel Prize winner in science who works as a professor, would not be counted as having a STEM job. And we cited National Science Foundation data showing that 16.5 million people report that their jobs require at least a bachelor's degree-level of STEM expertise.

The Sessions camp is right that he never said there are six million high-tech STEM jobs in the U.S., and we shouldn't have put it that way. But the data that Mr. Sessions does cite define the STEM market *even more narrowly*, and thus underscore our editorial argument. His claim that foreigners are stealing jobs from well-educated Americans depends on a definition of STEM jobs that distorts the actual STEM job market.

The STEM job details can be eye-glazing, but the facts support what basic economics teaches: Skilled immigrants enhance American prosperity, and the labor market isn't a zero-sum proposition.