

You may recall that earlier this year the Department of Homeland Security [disrupted schemes](#) where individuals fraudulently held student visas even though they were not attending class. [Gus has been long concerned](#) with gaps in the student visa system and [questioned DHS officials about those shortcomings in March.](#)

More recently, [Gus, introduced H.R. 5208: the Student Visa Security Improvement Act](#), which would improve the background checks conducted on student visa applicants and enhance America's ability to ensure that, once in the country, foreign students are abiding by the terms of their visas.

On Tuesday, [ABC Action News in Tampa](#) featured the bill in a story which highlighted the need to strengthen the system:

TAMPA, FL -- Thousands of international students come to Tampa Bay to study at area colleges and universities every year. Nearly one hundred thousand come to the U.S. from abroad. While the vast majority are here to learn, there have been increased efforts to keep an eye on foreign students since 9/11.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was created after 9/11 because several of the hijackers who entered the U.S. did so using student visas. It's a database run by the Department of Homeland Security meant to keep track of every foreign student issued a visa that comes to the U.S.

"We're required to report students actually come to the university and they are enrolled in their course for each semester and then we need to report whether the students graduated or whether the students were to leave," said Marsha Taylor of the University South Florida.

The need is obvious. To prevent what the 9/11 hijackers were able to do; enter the U.S. under false pretenses and fall off the radar screen.

Congressman Gus Bilirakis is a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security.

"That's what happens. They come over here on student visas and they drop out of school and then you never hear from them again," said Bilirakis.

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According to The Department of Homeland Security over 7,300 foreign students nationwide left their programs prematurely this year but remain in the U.S. illegally -- including 145 students from Florida.

Last year, 5 percent of all foreign students who remained here illegally had been attending schools in Florida.

"I see it all the time, that's why we're filing this bill because it's got to stop," said Bilirakis.

Bilirakis introduced legislation requiring DHS to do a better job screening foreign students before they come into the U.S. and more importantly making sure they leave when they're suppose to.

"We want to make sure if they are leaving the program early they are not here for the right reasons they're not attending classes the Department of Homeland Security is notified and they are deported," Bilirakis said.

Bilirakis's bill also requires foreign students to check in with school administrators in person every 30 days.