

Where Have All The Visas Gone?

Anti-Immigrant proponents complain that a primary cause of our country's immigration woes is that US businesses regularly employ illegal aliens. Their argument suggests that if only businesses would follow the law and apply for the appropriate visas for their foreign workers, then we'd have no more immigration problems.

Let's analyze the underlying logic of this complaint by examining the reality of one very common work visa: H-1B Visa for Professionals (Specialty Occupations).

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The H-1B Visa category is often referred to as the "Visa for Professionals" because this visa is typically granted to a foreigner who has the required university or higher professional degree (or its equivalent in work experience) and is seeking a position which requires that educational/professional level as a minimum requirement.

For example, H-1B visas are granted to foreigners seeking positions as: Accountants, Computer Programmers, Graphic Designers, Hotel Managers, Investment Analysts, Journalists, Engineers and the like.

One Year's Worth of Visas Gone in 2 Days.

Until a few years ago, the US Government issued 195,000 new H-1B visas per fiscal year. Now, the US Government issues only 65,000 new H-1B visas per fiscal year. [Note: Free Trade Visas for Chile and Singapore (approximately 7000) reduce this number further. 20,000 additional H-1B visas are granted to foreigners who have earned a Masters or higher degree from a US institution of higher education.]

During the past two years, an entire year's allocation of H-1B visas were gone within the first 2 days that petitions for H-1B visas could be filed. Generally, petitions can be filed no earlier than April 1st. They are all gone by April 3rd. Does this make sense economically? No. But don't ask me. Ask Bill Gates.

Microsoft Hires 100's of Software Workers to Work in Canada, not the US.

In July 2007, Microsoft hired several hundred software engineers to work in its Vancouver, Canada plant, rather than in its Redmond, Washington plant. (See "So long, software jobs – Microsoft's expansion to Canada, where it can hire skilled workers, sends a message about US policy." Los Angeles Times, July 10, 2007; <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jul/10/opinion/ed-microsoft10>).

Immigration Task Force Trying to Make a Difference.

Does our US Immigration System make sense? No. We should not have a system that forces our largest and most innovative high technology companies to outsource their highest paying jobs and their brightest minds to Canada, and other countries.

The Joint Immigration Task Force of the Free Trade Alliance and the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, with support from the San Antonio Greater Chamber of Commerce, is trying to make a difference. Join us as we attempt to persuade our elected officials that we need an immigration system that will directly address the economic and social needs of Americans today.