

American Immigration Lawyers Association

Press Release

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Contact:
Judith Golub
(202) 216-2403
Julia Hendrix
(202) 216-2404

U.S. Employers Out of Luck? The Clock is Ticking Toward an H Visa Blackout

Washington, DC – With the new fiscal year beginning today, time is running out for employers who seek to hire H-1B professionals and H-2B non-agricultural seasonal workers. Due to restrictive numerical limits on both visa programs, employers are anticipating as much as a year-long blackout on H-1B and H-2B visas. “Congress needs to act,” said Paul Zulkie, President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).

If left unremedied, U.S. employers’ inability to hire needed professional and seasonal workers will put this nation at a global and economic disadvantage. Without access to H-1B visas, U.S. employers will be unable to hire professionals with cutting-edge knowledge and skills—including recent graduates from top U.S. universities with advanced degrees in math and science—to develop new products, engage in groundbreaking research, create new jobs, and compete in the global marketplace. This problem is exacerbated by the insufficient number of U.S. students graduating with advanced degrees to fill highly specialized positions in math and science. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the demand for these graduates will only increase over time. In fact, European countries are updating their immigration laws to attract this highly educated talent, making the competition to retain the best and the brightest that much more difficult to win.

Cutting edge professionals are not the only workers needed in our labor market. H-2B visa holders also are essential to the American economy. These seasonal non-agricultural workers help keep the doors of American businesses open. H-2B workers include restaurant, landscape, food production, and hotel service workers. They fill the rosters of our minor league hockey and baseball teams, teach our kids to ski, and repair helicopters that fight summer forest fires.

“Never before have so many employers, both small and large, faced this dilemma,” said Paul Zulkie. “Without access to H-1B professionals and H-2B workers, our nation’s economic well-being will be threatened, with jobs lost and our nation put at a competitive disadvantage.”

AILA urges Congress and the Administration to resolve this impending crisis by increasing access to H-1B and H-2B visas. Unless action is taken before the end of the 108th Congress, American companies and the economies of local communities nationwide that depend on these workers will suffer dramatically.

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Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides its Members with continuing legal education, information, and professional services. AILA advocates before Congress and the Administration and provides liaison with the DHS and other government agencies. AILA is an Affiliated Organization of the American Bar Association.

American Immigration Lawyers Association
918 F Street NW, Washington, DC, 20004-1400
Phone (202) 216-2400; Fax (202) 783-7853
www.aila.org