

# Bush wants H-1B visa cap hike

Patrick Thibodeau

**January 25, 2007** (Computerworld) WASHINGTON -- President Bush yesterday called for an increase in the federal cap on H-1B visas, an issue he said he feels "strongly" about and wants to work with Congress to make happen.

Bush, who [spoke](#) at E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co. in Wilmington, Del., is on the road pushing some of the proposals ([download PDF](#)) made in his State of the Union address Tuesday night. More than 1,000 DuPont employees heard him talk, according to the company.

Bush did not mention H-1B visas in his Tuesday address to Congress, but at DuPont he told employees: "I also want you to know I understand that we need to make sure that when a smart person from overseas wants to come and work in DuPont, it's in our interests to allow him or her to do so." His remarks were included in a transcript of his speech to the DuPont workers.

"We've got to expand what's called H-1B visas," said Bush.

The president went on to say: "I feel strongly about what I'm telling you. It makes no sense to say to a young scientist from India, 'You can't come to America to help this company develop technologies that help us deal with our problems.' So we've got to change that..., change that mind-set in Washington, D.C. I know we can work together on that."

This is not the first time Bush has asked Congress to allow more H-1B workers into the U.S. Indeed, Bush's remarks about the program at DuPont are almost a cut-and-paste job from a [talk](#) he gave in February 2006 at 3M Co.'s headquarters in St. Paul, Minn.

In that speech, Bush said there was a need to fill high-tech jobs in the U.S. "And so one way to deal with this problem, and probably the most effective way, is to recognize that there's a lot of bright engineers and chemists and physicists from other lands that are either educated here, or received an education elsewhere but want to work here. And they come here under a program called H-1B visas," said Bush.

Bush called on Congress last year to raise the cap, but it failed to do so, leaving the limit at 65,000. There are exemptions, however, including 20,000 additional visas for foreign nationals who graduate from U.S. colleges and universities with advanced degrees.

In supplemental material prepared by the White House about the president's State of the Union address, the issue of temporary workers from other countries was discussed. It said, in part: "Such a program will serve the needs of our economy by providing a lawful and fair way to match willing employers with willing foreign workers to fill jobs that Americans have not taken."

Ron Hira, vice president of career activities at IEEE-USA, a unit of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc., said he and the IEEE "wholeheartedly endorse this principle. But the H-1B program does not meet it."

Under the H-1B program, "employers do not have to search for Americans, and can prefer an H-1B [visa holder] over an American citizen or green card holder. So, if the President is arguing to reform the H-1B program, then this is great. But I doubt he is."

Congress is expected to see legislation calling for an increase in the H-1B cap, but whether that effort will be approved by the new Congress is unclear.

DuPont outsources much of its IT operations to Computer Sciences Corp. It signed outsourcing pact in 1997 for 10 years and in 2005 extended that agreement to 2014. The subsequent contract is worth as much as \$2 billion.