



Sirotablog

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Tuesday, October 23, 2007

H-1Bs And the Triumph of Buypartisanship

To really see the sheer corruption of our political process, you have to look at the lies that simply refuse to go away in the face of overwhelming facts - the myths that are utterly and completely untrue, yet which are regarded as unchallenged truth in Washington because they serve to rationalize Big Money's agenda.

Regular readers of this my writing know that two of those lies are the [Great Education Myth](#) and the [Great Labor Shortage Lie](#). The first says that if only Americans obtained more skills and education, they would be able to obtain high-paying jobs. The second says that America faces a shortage of workers, which requires companies to import workers from abroad. Both of these fables have been thoroughly [debunked by economic data and economic analysis](#) from across the political spectrum.

The [Great Education Myth](#) and the [Great Labor Shortage Lie](#) converge in the debate over H-1B visas - the visas that the American government gives to corporations allowing them to import high-skilled workers from abroad. Lobbyists and the Members of Congress they have bought push for more H-1B visas by claiming that because Americans are not properly educated, they don't have the skills needed for high-tech jobs, and thus, there is a shortage of domestic high-tech workers to fill such jobs.

Again, this rationale has been exposed as a fraud. [Duke University researchers](#) this year definitively proved that there is, in fact, no shortage of engineers in the United States. Rochester Institute of Technology professor Ron Hira has published a [study](#) proving that the H-1B program accelerates job outsourcing. His study was verified by [data](#) showing that the companies that most use the H-1B program are those whose whole business is outsourcing. Meanwhile, top corporate lawfirms - hired by the very companies lobbying for more H-1B visas under the guise of the Great Labor Shortage Lie - have been [caught on tape](#) running seminars on how to abuse the H-1B system as a tool to lower American workers' wages, which the [data again shows is exactly what the program does](#).

Yet, despite all of the facts and despite the 2006 election that saw Democrats promise to defend the economic interests of America's middle class, we get [this story from Roll Call today](#):

"A key bipartisan group of lawmakers is pushing for enacting a short-term boost in immigration visas by the end of the year...A letter from the New Democrats signed by 16 Members to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) on Monday urged a significant boost to the numbers of visas allowed for tech workers, nurses, agricultural workers and seasonal workers to alleviate a crush of demand from employers. The technology industry in particular has been vocal about its desire to expand the H-1B visa program for highly skilled immigrants...The push to add visas for high-tech workers has support even among some House Republicans...House Minority Leader John Boehner (Ohio) was among the 30 Republicans who signed a letter to Pelosi earlier this month calling for cutting red tape so that high-tech companies can get the workers they need. The Republican letter...said lawmakers should 'find a way to ensure that America continues to attract the best and brightest minds from around the world' and allow companies to do so 'without unnecessary delays and waiting periods.'...The New Democrats, meanwhile, have already had meetings with House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (Md.) in which they've made it clear that expanding visas is a top priority."

Understand how much of an admission of sheer corruption this really is. The United States Congress cannot find the courage to pass a comprehensive, humane immigration policy because both parties are polarized. Yet, the one immigration issue they can all come together on is a push to expand a visa program that the data definitively proves is designed to help tech companies (which are [huge campaign contributors](#)) drive American wages into the ground, exploit foreign workers, and accelerate job outsourcing. Most disgusting of all, this push is happening all under the guise of verifiable and is being championed by a group of Democratic lawmakers whose own

fundraising arm [brags in public newsletters](#) about bringing together tech industry lobbyists and lawmakers at lavish bayside retreats.

This has, of course, become par for the course in this Congress. Democrats won Congress in 2006 on a [promise to oppose NAFTA-style trade agreements](#). Yet with Congress unable to pass much of anything, they are edging closer to finding consensus on passing - shocker! - a [whole new package of lobbyist-written NAFTAs](#). Congress cannot pass progressive tax reform to help the middle class, but as the [Wall Street Journal today reports](#), Democrats are moving towards endorsing a plan to slash corporate tax rates.

As [Congressional Quarterly](#) reported this week, K Street lobbying firms are now staffed up with former Democratic congressional staffers. As all of this shows, they are verifying what Leo Hindery told me in [my most recent nationally syndicated newspaper column](#): "The wealthy are now a political constituency unto themselves that is decidedly nonpartisan."

Hindery calls it "nonpartisan" - I call it buypartisan. Whatever you want to call it, it is fueled by the very corruption we are seeing on trade, taxes and now on immigration. This is the Democratic Party of Washington, D.C. - a party that seems more and more comfortable selling out the middle-class to make corporate lobbyists happy.

David Sirota at 9:09 AM