

## CWA Fighting for H1-B Visa Limits to Save American Jobs

As businesses lobby to bring more high-tech workers into the United States through the H1-B visa program, CWA and the AFL-CIO are fighting for American jobs by supporting a bill to cap the number visas at the current limit of 65,000.

The Defend the American Dream Act, H.R. 4378, is sponsored by Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) and would further reform the program by adding reporting requirements for companies that hire foreign workers with H1-B visas.

Pascrell said his bill, "would provide relief to the thousands of Americans who have high-tech degrees in one hand and pink slips in the other."

From Bill Gates on down, employers are clamoring to expand the limit. This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to raise the allowable number of H1-B visas to 115,000 as part of an immigration bill that will now go to the full Senate.

WashTech-CWA President Marcus Courtney, whose members are aggressively fighting a higher cap, believes the Pascrell reforms can prevail, even if it takes time and new blood in Congress. "This is the strongest H1-B reform bill ever introduced," he said. "If we work hard there's no reason we can't have 150 or 200 co-sponsors behind this bill in the next six months, but only if enough people talk to their Congress members about this."

WashTech sent an e-mail alert to thousands of tech workers on CWA's TechsUnite.org network urging them to contact members of Congress in support of the bill.

CWA Legislative Director Lou Gerber said Pascrell's bill would reform the visa program in several important ways, including a provision for paying prevailing wages, similar to the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act. That way, he said, "the allure to high-tech companies of cheap wages is diminished."

Though Gerber says the legislation won't advance while the Republicans control Congress, "Representative Pascrell has laid down an important marker aimed at preventing abuse of the H1-B program and reining in globalization gone wild."

Members from Seattle-based WashTech were in Washington, D.C., for CWA's legislative conference earlier this month and met with members of Congress about the effects of H1-B visas on American jobs. The same week, Gates was visiting the city to lobby for expanding the program.

Courtney said he found that few people understand the facts. "Is there really a worker shortage? That argument works because the high-tech industry, in the person of Bill Gates, runs around saying it," he said. "So Congress now thinks this is true. But they don't have any basis for this, no numbers, no facts."

He noted that several studies have shown that H1-B visa workers — who are allowed to work in the U.S. for up to six years — earn substantially less than American tech workers; and further, the program has caused an increase in unemployment among American workers. For more information: <http://www.washtech.org>