



Congressman Lamar Smith and President Bush Discussing Jobs and the Economy

November 22, 2004

**Christopher Chichester
Press Secretary
202-225-4236**

House Passes Smith's Immigration Reform Bill

Congressman Lamar Smith today announced that reforms he authored to the H-1B and L Visa programs passed the House of Representatives as part of the Omnibus appropriations bill (H.R. 4818).

"This package of reforms to our immigration system is good for American workers and the U.S. economy," said Rep. Smith.

"We focused on opening the doors to those with the talents to contribute to our economic growth while closing the door on fraud and abuse," stated Rep. Smith. "We must ensure U.S. companies have access to the individuals they require to compete in today's global economy. "

Rep. Smith's bill:

- * Exempts up to 20,000 Masters and PhD students from the annual 65,000 H-1B cap, which is sufficient to meet the needs of high-tech companies seeking highly-skilled **foreign workers**.
- * Permanently reauthorizes the fee provisions associated with the H-1B visa, which expired on October 1, 2003.
- * Creates a new anti-fraud program to be funded by a \$500 anti-fraud fee on all initial H-1B and L visa applications. The fees would raise approximately \$85 million.
- * Prevents the practice of a consulting company bringing in foreign workers to replace American workers.
- * Grants the Department of Labor new authority to initiate investigations. This important reform will reduce potential abuses in the H-1B program. Previously investigations had to be initiated through the filing of a complaint by an outside party.
- * Requires businesses to pay visa-holders 100% of the prevailing wage (previously 95%).

