

Steve Tisza, President CWA Local 4250

From: <senator_obama@obama.senate.gov>
To: <istvantisza@direcway.com>
Sent: Friday, April 07, 2006 11:57 AM
Subject: Message from Senator Barack Obama

Dear Steve:

Thank you for writing me with your concerns. I agree that the H-1B visa program should be continually monitored, but I do believe that the limited increase in visas for highly skilled immigrants will benefit the economy.

I understand and have heard your concerns about the H1-B visa program and its potential effects on the jobs and wages of American workers. The intent is that H1-B visas only be issued if qualified American workers are unable to take the jobs in question. Also, H1-B visa holders should be paid a fair market wage for their work, not less than what an American worker would make for performing the same work. The intent of the program is not to undercut existing wage structures by importing foreign workers.

The demand for these workers is clear. When the H-1B annual numerical limits reverted to 65,000 from 195,000 the Fiscal Year 2004 limit was reached in mid-February 2004, and the Fiscal Year 2005 limit was reached on October 1, 2004, the first day of the fiscal year.

I believe that within limits, skilled immigrants play a valuable role in our economy. I understand that we need to create more jobs for American workers. And, using the technology sector as an example, the economic production of companies assisted by workers on H1-B visas in 1998 created more than \$16.8 billion in sales and over 58,000 jobs. The great majority of these new jobs are going to American workers. Immigrants are not the cause of the squeeze on middle class families. Tax, workforce, and infrastructure policies that favor the wealthy at the expense of greater deficits hurt working class Americans. Failing to address the health care crisis in America while favoring pharmaceutical companies hurts working Americans. Scapegoating immigrants will not help us rise to meet these challenges.

But I fully agree that H1-B hires should be a last recourse as a matter of labor policy. I support the efforts of the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security to ensure that employers and H1-B applicants follow the intent and restrictions of the program. It is incumbent upon the Department of Labor to monitor the wages being paid to H1-B visa holders and enforce the H1-B program's provision that wages reflect the current job market.

As this debate continues, I believe it is important for Congress to assess how the H1-B visa affects job opportunities for Americans and wages in the relevant sectors. I look forward to working with the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security and my colleagues in Congress to determine where there may be gaps in the enforcement of the program as it stands. I would also like to explore increasing the burden on employers to prove that all attempts had been made to hire qualified American workers. I then will take the appropriate steps to protect the interests of American workers.

Again, thank you for writing me about the H1-B visa program. Please stay in touch on any issue of concern to you.

Sincerely,

Barack Obama
United States Senator

P.S. Our system does not allow direct response to this email. However, if you would like to contact me again, please use the form on the website: <http://obama.senate.gov/contact/>

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