

Tech Group Grants "Weasel Award" To Senate Hopeful from Virginia

The IT Professionals Association of America (ITPAA) has awarded its first Weasel Award of 2006 to Senate hopeful Harris Miller (Democrat) of Virginia for his efforts promoting offshoring and the importation of foreign workers.

Wilmington, DE (PRWEB) April 18, 2006 -- The Information Technology Professionals Association of America (ITPAA), a high-tech advocacy group based in Wilmington, Delaware has handed out its first Weasel Award of 2006 to Senate hopeful Harris Miller (Democrat) of Virginia. The organization, representing over 1,200 professionals nationally, presents the award to business and political leaders that it believes betrays the trust of the American people and threatens America's standing in the technology sector.

Scott Kirwin, leader of the organization, states that as head of the high-tech industry lobby group ITAA, "Miller lobbied tirelessly for laws making it easier to offshore jobs, and fought every effort to stem the erosion of America's dominance in the technology field. He also lobbied to drive down salaries and wages by dumping foreign workers into the domestic job market under the H-1b and L-1 visa programs." The Federation for American Immigration Reform (www.fairus.org) reports that millions of trained foreigners have entered the US under the H-1b and L-1 visas, taking jobs for 25-50% less than similarly skilled Americans.

"Harris Miller worked hard for a constituency of foreign nationals. That constituency can't vote for him in the June 13th Virginia primary, but those his policies hurt can."

Kirwin cites Miller's positions and statements during his tenure as head of the ITAA as documented by tech observer John Pardon, the ITPAA and recent AFL-CIO statements:

1. In New Jersey Miller opposed legislation to prohibit off-shore outsourcing of state contracts.
2. Miller opposed an amendment by Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) to the FY 2005 Agriculture department appropriations bill to prohibit the offshore outsourcing of all federal contracts related to the federal food stamp program.
3. Miller's persistently hyped "job shortages" without any evidence to back up such claims. Kirwin notes that during the last recession, in April 2002 the ITAA reported a 500,000 IT positions went unfilled, and half a million workers were needed from abroad to fill them. At the same time the Labor Department released figures showing that 500,000 jobs had disappeared from the economy.
4. On 10/20/03 Miller testified before the House Small Business Committee on the off-shoring of white collar jobs. The Atlanta Journal—Constitution 10/21/03 reported:
As U.S. companies send more high-tech work overseas, they are creating a "downward pressure on salaries" that may help slow American job losses, a technology industry leader told Congress on Monday. Indeed, U.S. workers may have to get used to lower wages, said Harris Miller, president of the Information Technology Association of America.
5. 11/20/03 article in Tech Worker News entitled "IT Industry: Race to the Bottom", summed up Miller's work:
By pumping up the number of technologically skilled immigrants allowed into the country and outsourcing

growing numbers of tech jobs abroad, these firms [U.S. technology companies are well on their way to guaranteeing that whatever jobs of the future remain in America pay as little as possible. Worse, in the process, they're discouraging more and more young Americans from studying science and technology, and thus encouraging a dangerous dumbing-down of the nation's future workforce

"Harris is not someone who wants to see jobs leaving this country," Miller's communication's director, Taylor West, said.

Kirwin laughs. "That's news to me because offshoring and low wages are the only things Miller knows about."

He is critical of Miller's campaign statements calling for education improvements and better broadband access. "Broadband is going to stop offshoring? Even economists who support free trade don't believe that." As for education, Kirwin cites America's status as the number one destination for foreign students in the world. "If our education is so bad, why do people from abroad flock here to go to school?"

He is also critical of Miller's criticism of opponent Jim Webb for his statements on Affirmative Action. "Offshoring and importing foreign workers have hurt minorities more than anything else. American minorities have borne the brunt of the entry-level and mid-level jobs that disappeared through Miller's efforts. His stances aren't words or promises of a politician: they are actions that ended with a result. And that result was worse job prospects for minority Americans."

Kirwin says that he is amazed by what changes he has seen in the American economy in a short span of three years since founding the ITPAA. "Miller and his group used to say that only low-level jobs would go abroad, that high-level, better paying jobs would stay. However the foreign firms that Miller lobbied for aren't stupid: they are moving up the food chain to get at the more lucrative work. As a result we see high-level engineering and design work leaving the country, and cutting edge technical jobs in fields that didn't even exist a few years ago now being done in Bangalore and Beijing."

"Meanwhile the fastest growing jobs in the US Bureau of Labor Statistics – healthcare aides and retail/food service - don't require a college degree or advanced training. They also happen to be some of the lowest paying jobs in the country."

"Is it good for America to offshore the decent jobs and keep the low paying ones?" he asks, adding "People like Miller scoff at national boundaries. They think that people in China and India feel the same disdain they feel for their own country. But Indians and Chinese are some of the most patriotic people on the planet. No matter how lucrative the offer, they will do what is best for their country. Unfortunately, Harris Miller doesn't get that."

Previous winners of the award include Bill Gates for his support of the H-1b visa program during a time of declining enrollment in Computer Science programs, and Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) for her statements supporting outsourcing on a trip to India while publicly criticizing it at home.

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