



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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July 19, 2007

Dear Senator,

As President of the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO, I am writing regarding your consideration of H.R. 2669, *The Higher Education Act*. It is my understanding that during consideration of this legislation an amendment aimed at increasing the number of H-1B Visas from 65,000 to 115,000 in 2008 could be offered by Senators Cornyn (R, TX), Gregg (R, NH), Enzi (R, WY) and Smith (R, OR). As a union that represents tens of thousands of White-Collar workers, IFPTE is rendering its opposition to this legislation.

Even though the Senate rejected the comprehensive immigration bill just last month, it is clear that high tech employers are once again in the Halls of Congress falsely claiming that there are not enough high tech workers right here at home to fill the positions. What they probably failed to mention is that in many cases it is the very high tech workers that are losing their jobs to H-1B recipients that are actually training their replacements.

What is lost in this debate however is the fact that the H-1B program is as unfair to the visa holder as it is to the worker that loses his/her job. Visa holders receive significantly lower wages, get little to no health benefits, are not subject to the same labor protections as their American counterparts, cant unionize, and have no voice on the job. If they were to speak up they would most assuredly be fired by their employer and sent back to their homeland. This is not a program to fill high-tech jobs, but it is a program to give employers a pool of cheap labor that has no voice on the job.

Before expanding the H-1B program the Congress should ensure that the current 65,000 visa holders receive the same wages as their American counterparts, the same health benefits, are able to join a union and are afforded the same Labor protections. In addition, employers should be made to pay for the visas equal to one year's salary of the prevailing wage received by the visa holder. Those proceeds should then go toward scholarships for American students that want to study science, engineering and other highly technical fields. If there were such a shortage of American workers, then there is no reason why employers would oppose such a program.

As it stands now though this amendment will most certainly lead to the displacement of thousands of current and potential American high-tech workers. As such, we at IFPTE are opposed to the Cornyn/Gregg/Enzi/Smith amendment and ask that you vote against it when it comes before the full Senate tonight or later this week.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or IFPTE Legislative Director Matt Biggs, at (301) 565-9016.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Junemann,
President