



# Immigrants Support Network

President William J. Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

July 21, 2000

Dear President Clinton:

On behalf of the Immigrants Support Network (ISN), I am writing to urge you to endorse the provisions of S. 2668, the Family, Work and Immigrant Integration Amendments of 2000, introduced on a bipartisan basis by Senators Bob Graham and Gordon Smith, and other pending bills that reform the process by which H-1B visa holders can obtain permanent residence in the United States. The Immigrants Support Network (ISN), founded in 1998, represents over 16,000 highly skilled workers living in 48 states who work in the United States on temporary employment-based (H-1B) visas and are seeking to obtain permanent residence. ISN is the largest and fastest-growing association of its kind. Most of our members work in high technology industries such as software, semiconductors, and the Internet.

America has been winning the international race for primacy in the high tech industry in part because of the highly skilled talent it has attracted from around the world. Most of these highly skilled workers have come here on temporary visas that allow them to work here for six years. Although legally eligible to apply for permanent residence through their employers, H-1B workers are being forced to leave the country because of unconscionable administrative backlogs in green card processing and yearly per country ceilings that only allow a limited number of people to obtain green cards from specific countries.

A recent study by Lindsay B. Lowell of the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University, entitled *H-1B Workers: Estimating the Population*, underscores the severity of problems faced by current H-1B workers seeking green cards. According to the study, less than 25% of the current H-1B workforce will obtain a green card within the six-year limit of their temporary visas. The study concludes that if the H-1B visa quota is raised to levels currently under consideration in pending legislation, less than 15% of H-1B workers will obtain permanent residence in the United States. The employment-based immigration system is already broken. It would be indefensible and reckless to raise the H-1B visa quota knowing that current and future H-1B workers will hardly have a chance to obtain permanent residence if the problems with the employment-based green card system are not addressed adequately.

The following four proposals, all included in S. 2668, would provide immediate relief to those H-1B workers who have been waiting for years for their green card applications to be processed:

1. Exemption of H-1B visas from their current six-year limit for professionals who have filed for permanent residence.
2. Allow yearly allocation of unused green cards to oversubscribed countries.
3. Allow unused visas in the employment-based category to be carried over to the following year.
4. Increase the job flexibility of H-1B visa holders whose applications for adjustment of status have not been adjudicated for a lengthy period of time.

Currently pending H-1B legislation in the Senate, S. 2045, the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act of 2000, includes only two of the above mentioned provisions: an exemption of the six-year limit on H-1B visas and yearly allocation of unused green cards to oversubscribed countries. S. 2668

---

A non-profit organization by and for Immigrants  
Mailing Address : P. O. Box 177, Budd Lake, NJ, 07828.  
Voice & Fax : (509) 278-2582 Email : [liaison@isn.org](mailto:liaison@isn.org)  
Visit ISN at <http://www.ISN.org>



# Immigrants Support Network

President Clinton  
July 24, 2000  
Page Two

includes both provisions of S. 2045 but also contains two additional important provisions: allowing unused visas in the employment-based category to be carried over to the following year and allowing those H-1B visa holders whose application for adjustment of status has not been adjudicated in more than 180 days to change jobs.

Pending legislation in the House of Representatives, H.R. 3983, the Helping to Improve Technology Education and Achievement Act of 2000, includes the same provisions as S. 2045, but also provides for unused visas in the employment-based immigration category to be carried over to the following year. It does not include a provision that would afford H-1B workers more freedom to change jobs if their application for adjustment of status has been pending for more than 180 days.

It makes little sense to force talented engineers and other highly skilled workers to leave the US at the end of six years, at the height of their ability to contribute to the American economy. It is a great loss for America's competitive position. By reforming the process by which highly skilled workers who are temporarily here can become permanent residents of the United States, America can capture the maximum value of their skills and ability to contribute to the economy while ensuring that these workers will have the full stability and incentives to maximize their contributions to America's society over their lifetimes.

Mr. President, you have already publicly endorsed raising the H-1B visa quota. However, we urge you to insist that, simultaneously with an H-1B visa quota increase, the process by which H-1B workers already in the United States become permanent residents must be reformed. It would be unconscionable to raise the H-1B visa quota without addressing problems in the employment-based immigration system. It is only fair that people who contribute much to American economic prosperity have a fair chance to obtain permanent residence in this country.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these matters with your staff. I will contact your staff shortly to follow up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bhushan H. Sethi", written over a horizontal line.

Bhushan H. Sethi.  
Vice-President (ISN).

cc: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright  
Attorney General Janet Reno  
Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman  
Secretary of Commerce Norman Mineta  
Gene Sperling  
Maria Echaveste  
Irene Bueno