

DEPORTING NEW YORK JOBS

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Body

Tomorrow, as it does every April 1, the government will open the doors to highly skilled foreign workers offered jobs in the U.S. And then, overwhelmed with applications, it will slam the doors shut.

It is a hurtful farce. And the pain is felt deeply here in New York, as firms large and small are denied the employees they need to remain competitive in a global economy.

When coming from abroad, those workers require so-called H-1B visas. To qualify, a foreign national must have a job offer in an occupation requiring specialized knowledge and training and expert skills.

Congress has capped the number of visas at 65,000, but U.S. companies have such a demand for highly skilled workers that they file more than 150,000 applications on the first day of eligibility every year.

High-tech firms have complained the loudest about being hampered by a shortage of qualified engineers and computer wizards. But a new survey by the Partnership for New York City has revealed that we are losing jobs because of the senseless visa restrictions and other restraints on international employment.

"Whole divisions and functions of companies and professional service firms are being relocated overseas," the survey said, adding, "thousands of jobs are being lost or relocated."

According to the partnership, "One bank reported that their New York offices lost 100 new hires in 2007 as a result of the unavailability of appropriate visas," while an investment bank moved an operation to London because "the Chinese national whom they hired to head it could not get a visa to work in New York."

Protectionist forces have refused to lift the H-1B cap in the misguided thinking that foreigners are stealing jobs from Americans. They are not. U.S. schools are simply not turning out enough math and science graduates to meet the demand.

Worse, instant communications have made it possible for companies to locate virtually anywhere. Increasingly, they are shifting to places like London that are far more welcoming to international labor.

Keeping these highly paid jobs - and the slots they generate for additional workers - is crucial to the futures of New York and America. The U.S. should stop barring entry to people who can keep America on the cutting edge in everything from finance to computers to medicine.

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