

PLAN TO LET SKILLED WORKERS ENTER / CONGRESS IS STUDYING A COMPROMISE. IT WOULD LET MORE FOREIGN WORKERS WITH COMPUTER SKILLS INTO THE COUNTRY.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

JULY 25, 1998 Saturday D EDITION

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

Found on Philly.com

Section: NATIONAL; Pg. A02

Length: 220 words

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Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

A congressional **compromise** announced yesterday would allow **more foreign computer** programmers, engineers and other **skilled workers** to work in the United States.

If passed by the House and Senate, the proposed changes to immigration law would increase the maximum number of visas granted yearly to **skilled workers** from 65,000 to 115,000 over the next three years.

From Microsoft's Bill Gates on down, the information-technology industry has lobbied intensely for the increase in so-called H-1B visas, saying the industry suffers from shortages of qualified employees.

Under the proposal, companies that depend on temporary **foreign** help must attest that they have recruited American **workers** and have not laid off an American employee to hire a **foreign worker**. Businesses also must attest that they will not funnel **skilled** immigrants to other firms that use them to replace laid-off **workers**.

Companies violating these provisions could be fined and barred from participating in the program for one year.

The high-tech industry had criticized the provisions as cumbersome, but the Clinton administration threatened to veto the measure if it did not include protections for U.S. **workers**.

Supporters of the revised **plan** hope to have it passed by the House and Senate before **Congress** goes on its August recess.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (90%); TECHNICIANS & TECHNOLOGICAL **WORKERS** (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); FACTORY **WORKERS** (90%); **FOREIGN** LABOR (90%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (78%); EMPLOYMENT VISAS (78%); LABOR SHORTAGES (73%); VETO (73%); FINES & PENALTIES (68%)

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Company: MICROSOFT CORP (57%)

Ticker: MSFT (NASDAQ) (57%)

Industry: FACTORY WORKERS (90%); COMPUTING & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (78%); SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & ENGINEERING (73%)

Person: BILL GATES (58%)

Geographic: UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: October 24, 2002

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