

# **Senate Poised To Expand Visas; Democrats Push to Ease Hispanic Immigration**

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## **Body**

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The **Senate** signaled its intention to pass legislation increasing **visas** for highly skilled foreign workers yesterday, in a preelection bid to satisfy the powerful high-tech industry's huge demand for employees.

But Republican leaders blocked a Democratic move to include provisions aimed at **easing** restrictions on **Hispanic immigration**, and **Democrats** responded by demanding that the provisions be included in a major spending bill.

If Republicans refuse, Democratic leaders said President Clinton will veto the spending bill, which would fund activities of the Commerce, Justice and State departments for next year, and produced letters showing they had enough votes to sustain the veto.

Yesterday's developments enhanced already strong prospects for passage of the high-tech bill before Congress adjourns next month and appeared to ensure a major fight over **immigration** from Latin America just as both parties and their presidential candidates are competing for the increasingly important **Hispanic** vote.

The 94 to 3 vote was the second procedural tally on the high-tech bill that demonstrated the bill's strong bipartisan support after months of aggressive lobbying by the technology industry. Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) predicted an "overwhelming" vote for passage by early next week.

This bill would raise from 115,000 to 195,000 the number of so-called H-1B **visas** that can be issued for foreign workers to come to the United States for up to six years to fill specialized jobs that companies say they cannot fill with American workers. Without new legislation, the limit would drop to 107,500 next year. Companies have estimated that 300,000 jobs are going unfilled because of a lack of skilled workers.

Clinton has indicated he supports an increase, and House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.) said the House would take up the **Senate** measure quickly if it could be passed without amendments.

The Democratic-drafted Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act would **expand** amnesty for immigrants who live illegally in this country to cover those who have been here since 1986, including many who were excluded from an earlier amnesty law because of bureaucratic delays. It would also make it easier for some immigrants, including Central Americans and Haitians, to obtain permanent residency and allow holders of expired **visas** to apply for legal residency without returning to their countries of origin.

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Republicans accused **Democrats** of trying to torpedo the high-tech bill with their amendments, while **Democrats** accused Republicans of wanting to sideline the **Hispanic** provisions without taking votes to keep from angering **Hispanic** voters.

## Classification

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**Industry:** FACTORY WORKERS (78%)

**Person:** BILL CLINTON (73%); TRENT LOTT (58%)

**Geographic:** UNITED STATES (92%); LATIN AMERICA (76%); CENTRAL AMERICA (56%)

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