

## ***A Recipe for Weakness; By limiting visas for skilled foreign professionals, the United States only harms itself.***

The Washington Post

June 4, 2008 Wednesday, Regional Edition

Copyright 2008 The Washington Post All Rights Reserved



**Distribution:** Maryland

**Section:** EDITORIAL COPY; Pg. A18

**Length:** 447 words

### **Body**

---

THANKS TO the nation's dysfunctional immigration system and the dysfunctional Congress that keeps it that way, tens of thousands of promising, intelligent, ambitious and highly skilled foreign professionals, including thousands receiving advanced degrees from American universities this month, will be denied a chance to contribute their expertise and energy to the American economy. Few policies match this one in terms of sheer irrationality, and few will do as much damage to this country's long-term prospects and competitiveness. Yet Congress, mired in a political swamp of its own making when it comes to immigration, seems incapable of extracting itself.

Although the United States welcomes unlimited numbers of foreign students and subsidizes their education in engineering, physics, computer science, medicine and other disciplines, those students face increasingly steep obstacles to employment here. So do educated foreign workers whose skills are needed in the American workforce.

This year, some 163,000 applicants from both categories vied for 85,000 H-1B work visas -- 65,000 for foreign workers with bachelor's degrees and another 20,000 for foreign alumni of U.S. graduate schools. In April, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services was so swamped it stopped accepting applicants after just five days; recipients were selected at random by computer lottery. The number of applications was a third higher than last year and shows no sign of abating.

All of that might seem fine and fair were it not for the fact that American-born scientists and PhDs are in short supply and that technology companies, among others, are clamoring to hire qualified foreigners, particularly those trained at U.S. universities. And it's not just worker bees who are drawn from the pool of foreign talent; so are the entrepreneurs who create jobs and fuel the economy. During the 10 years that ended in 2005, foreign-born strivers started a quarter of the new engineering and technology firms in this country. A similar proportion of international patent applications filed in the United States in 2006 originated with immigrants. To the anti-immigration crowd that accuses corporate America of favoring profits over patriotism, those facts should be troubling.

The truth is, America will be a feeble place without a continuing and adequate flow of foreign-born brainpower. America's loss of foreign-born experts translates directly into gains for China, India and other rapidly developing competitors. While the presidential candidates are stepping gingerly around the immigration debate, the ongoing brain drain of the best and brightest foreigners should give them, and the nation, pause.

A Recipe for Weakness; By limiting visas for skilled foreign professionals, the United States only harms itself.

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (91%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (90%); **FOREIGN** LABOR (90%); PASSPORTS & **VISAS** (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); INTELLIGENCE & COGNITION (78%); ECONOMIC MIGRATION (78%); EMPLOYMENT **VISAS** (78%); GRADUATE & **PROFESSIONAL** SCHOOLS (77%); **FOREIGN** STUDENTS (77%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (77%); LABOR FORCE (77%); COMPUTER SCIENCE (74%); POLITICAL CANDIDATES (70%); ENTREPRENEURSHIP (69%); STUDENT DISCIPLINE (69%); JOB CREATION (68%); EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (68%); PATENTS (65%)

**Organization:** US CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION SERVICES (55%)

**Industry:** GRADUATE & **PROFESSIONAL** SCHOOLS (77%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (77%); COMPUTER SCIENCE (74%)

**Geographic:** **UNITED STATES** (99%); INDIA (79%); CHINA (79%)

**Load-Date:** June 4, 2008