

Trump Takes Aim At H-1B Visa Program

Stella Potter

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"We believe jobs must be offered to American workers first, does that make sense?" "Go out and find me some cosmetic changes to make, "" says Daniel Ikenson, director of the trade policy center at the libertarian Cato Institute.

It's the promise that helped President Trump win the White House: To "Make America Great Again". He has already signed a number of executive orders since he took office, including the decision to ban travelers from some majority-Muslim nations.

The moves show Trump once again using his power to issue executive orders to try to fulfil promises he made a year ago in his election campaign, in this case to reform U.S. immigration policies and encourage purchases of American products. "Everyone in my administration will be expected to enforce every last "Buy American" provision on behalf of the American worker, and we are going to investigate every single trade deal that undermines these provisions", he said.

It's unclear how the program may change, but India's huge tech industry says America still has a shortage of skilled workers that the H-1B system was created to ease.

Going to a merit-based system "would ensure that only the most-skilled or highest-paid foreign workers would be chosen, incentivizing companies to look to hire American workers first", Lee added.

But according to studies, 80 per cent of the approved applications were for the two lowest wage levels allowed. Critics of the program claim staffing companies are undercutting American wages by using the visas to recruit foreign labor and then contracting those workers to large companies.

Trump made it clear that he doesn't agree with fact that H-1Bs are now doled out under a lottery system.

Each year on April 1, a fresh cap for H1-B visa applications is set by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The time-limited H-1B visas for skilled workers, which are sought by technology giants, are meant for scientists, engineers and computer programmers. "That would be real", Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) told reporters at a conference call on Tuesday. The order was short on detail, and does not change any current rules.

But critics say the program has been hijacked by staffing companies that use the visas to import foreigners - often from India - who will work for less than Americans.

"We're sending a powerful signal to the world", Trump said during his speech on Tuesday. Chamber of Commerce, also argued that "it would be a mistake to close the door on high-skilled workers from around the world who can contribute to American businesses' growth and expansion and make the US more competitive around the world".