H-1B Visas Take American Jobs

by Phyllis Schlafly March 21, 2012

When President Obama was participating in a live video chat, Jennifer Wedel asked him, "Why does the government continue to issue and extend H-1B visas when there are tons of Americans just like my husband with no job?" Her husband is a semiconductor engineer laid off three years ago and still unable to find an engineering job.



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We all would like the answer to that question.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that, counting only U.S.-born individuals, there are 101,000 with an engineering degree who are unemployed, another 244,000 who are not working or not looking for work and therefore not counted in unemployment statistics, and an additional 1.47 million who have an engineering degree but are not working as an engineer.

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Obama's answer to Mrs. Wedel sounded like he had been well briefed by the big corporation lobbyists. He even expressed bewilderment that any U.S. high-tech engineer could be out of work because industry executives tell him there is an unfilled "huge demand" for engineers.

Obama said, "H-1Bs should be reserved only for those companies who say they cannot find somebody in that particular field." Yes, indeed, they should. But in fact they are not.

Created in 1990, the H-1B program was designed for employers to import foreign H-1B workers to fill various high-tech jobs only when Americans could not be found, and the law was supposed to make it illegal for an employer to replace an American with an H-1B worker. However, the big corporation lobbyists succeeded in fuzzying up the law so there is now no effective rule to prevent employers from firing American jobholders and replacing them with H-1B aliens.

Big companies prefer H-1B workers because they can pay them significantly less than Americans, never have to give them a raise or promotion, and have the unilateral power to deport them. H-1B workers don't dare to complain about working conditions or unpaid long hours, and can't quit to take a better job.

Most H-1B workers are imported for entry-level jobs and trained by experienced U.S. workers who are then laid off. This process has introduced a new expression and acronym into the English language: DYOG: "Dig Your Own Grave."

One Senator understands this problem: Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA). In a letter to the President last month, he pointed out how Obama's response to Jennifer Wedel shows he is only regurgitating the corporation lobbyists' sales talk with their phony mantra that "there are better and brighter people abroad."

Grassley said "thousands of qualified Americans remain out of work while companies are incentivized to import foreign workers." Grassley criticized the Obama administration for proposing new rules to "attract and retain highly skilled immigrants" to replace Americans, to expand eligibility for foreign students to remain in the U.S., to eliminate protections for U.S. workers, to allow employers to pay lower wages to alien workers, and to give work authorizations to spouses of H-1B workers, thereby increasing competition for Americans looking for all kinds of jobs.

Obama has made expanding H-1Bs a feature of his reelection campaign, trying to broaden the program that already allows the importation of 65,000 H-1B visa aliens annually. Some people are even pushing the ridiculous notion of stapling a green card to college diplomas, so that foreigners would automatically be allowed to stay and work in our country.

Will that include the 57,000 Chinese undergraduates now in U.S. universities, most of whom were admitted on the basis of fake transcripts and recommendation letters, and are awarded college degrees for which they did not qualify? That's another racket that should be cleaned up.

Dickinson State University in North Dakota awarded degrees to 584 foreign students who did not earn them. On the day of an all-campus student meeting concerning this matter, Education Dean Douglas LaPlante was found dead from an apparently self-inflicted gunshot.

Media coverage of Obama's colloquy with Mrs. Wedel focused on inviting her to send her husband's resume, but the real news should have been jobs. Is Obama ignorant of the unemployment reality facing U.S. engineers, or is he disingenuously reciting the self-serving lies of his high-tech donors?

A good example of how the H-1B visa system works was described in a lawsuit filed against Molina Healthcare Inc., which handles Medicaid and Medicare paperwork for the government, and Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp., which recruits H-1B workers in India. On January 14, 2010, one day after the Department of Labor approved Molina's application for 40 H-1B workers, Molina fired approximately 40 competent U.S. programmers, managers and analysts and hired 40 H-1B replacements imported by Cognizant from India.

That is how H-1B visas work in the real world to take jobs away from Americans.