

Trump Administration Sends Mixed Signals on High-Skilled Immigrants

By Evan Zimmerman, J.D. Candidate 2020 | March 7, 2019

Despite hopes of reprieve, the Trump Administration has steadily [increased its rejections and delays](#) of H1-B visa applications. This comes on the heels of [previous restrictions](#), adding a layer of complexity to the application process.

The H1-B visa, often referred to as the high-skill visa, is often used for professionals like programmers and engineers. In the United States, immigrants apply for one of several types of visas, each of which has its own requirements. The H1-B program has faced criticism in the past. Many of its recipients, [especially those employed by Indian consulting firms like Tata and Infosys](#), are believed to not be very highly skilled despite dominating the process. Furthermore, it is highly oversubscribed, with annual lottery rates reaching a mere [35% in 2018](#). Despite extremely high public support for high skilled immigration the process remains difficult.

Nonetheless, although the United States is widely considered [friendly to immigrants](#)—it is consistently one of the most immigrant-friendly nations in [polls](#)—it is no longer viewed as attractive as in the past. The American immigration system has long been [unique](#) but also remarkably [complex and difficult](#). The number of people receiving visas decreased by [12%](#) last year. This has been particularly acute for high-skilled immigrants. In order to compete for globally itinerant talent, other countries have created special visas and immigration programs, like Canada's Global Skills visa or China's Thousand Talents program. Indeed, one website, Move2Canada.com, [noted](#) that last year its most popular group was American technology workers.

The Trump Administration has sent mixed signals. The early message from the Trump campaign, and then his administration, was centered around [ugly](#) statements about immigrants of any kind. President Trump has remained unequivocal in his calls to reduce illegal immigration and low-skilled immigration, but since taking office he has at times embraced high-skilled immigration, [calling for more](#) immigration of foreigners with special skills. Nonetheless, in 2018 he supported the Cotton-Perdue RAISE Act, which would have sharply [reduced immigration](#) both low- and high-skilled.

