



Changes In the H-1B program during 2025

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Main Takeaways

- Sponsoring a new H-1B worker from abroad now costs companies over \$100,000, following a 2025 presidential proclamation.
- The traditional random lottery has been replaced with a weighted system that prioritizes higher-paid and higher-skilled applicants.
- A new Department of Labor initiative called Project Firewall is targeting companies that misuse H-1B visas or replace U.S. workers.
- These policy changes have faced multiple legal challenges but are justified by the administration as efforts to protect American workers and promote domestic training.

About the Author

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Overview

Over the last year, major changes have occurred for H-1B visas, or "nonimmigrant" temporary work visas for specialty workers. Fees for companies to sponsor new H-1B's, for example, have swelled to over \$100,000, while the selection process for applicants has changed from a lottery system to a weighted system prioritizing higher-skilled and higher-paid workers. A new initiative has also begun, referred to as "Project Firewall," which seeks to crack down on any misuse of such visas. The Trump Administration has stated these initiatives are intended to promote training and education of domestic workers.

Increased fees

The filing of a petition for an H-1B visa was already a rather pricy affair, with [processing fees](#), asylum program fees, fraud prevention fees, and fees from previous protectionist legislation easily totaling several thousand dollars. But following a [proclamation](#) by President Trump on September 19th, 2025, all previous fees are now dwarfed by the new \$100,000 fee. This fee only applies to new workers being sponsored from abroad, not to workers already living in the United States. This fee has been justified as a method to prevent abuse of the visa program. President Trump specifically cited misuse in the IT sector. This proclamation has already had multiple legal challenges in court, including cases brought by the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#), [Global Nurse Force](#), and the [State of California](#). These cases have questioned presidential authority to create additional fees.

Change in selection process

Historically, when the demand for H-1B visas superseded the cap of 65,000 visas annually, the U.S. relied on a lottery system--where every applicant had equal odds of "winning" the lottery. [A new rule](#) from the DHS, published on December 29th, 2025, will replace this lottery system with a weighted lottery. What weighs higher? Applications involving higher-paying and higher-skilled workers. A similar selection system that focused on wage levels was attempted in 2021, but it was subsequently withdrawn. Despite pushback from [labor policy advocates](#) and [higher education associations](#), the new rule is set to go into effect February 27th, 2026.

Project Firewall

[Project Firewall](#) is a new [initiative](#) from the Department of Labor looking to crack down on fraud and misuse of H-1B visas. The initiative will target companies who: hire foreign-born workers when native-born workers are available; replace native-born workers with foreign-born workers; and use foreign-born workers as temporary replacements during strikes.