

# A Floral Protest Over Job-Based Visas

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In a Gandhi-inspired protest, foreigners working legally in the United States sent thousands of flowers to a top immigration official yesterday to draw attention to their complaints about job-based visas.

The official, Emilio Gonzalez, director of Citizenship and Immigration Services, arranged for trucks to haul the bouquets of roses, carnations and other flowers to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington and the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md.

“The reaction from the patients, family and staff was overwhelming,” said Michael Briggs, an American Red Cross employee at Walter Reed who helped distribute the flowers. “They were very appreciative, and they were excited.”

The flower protest was staged by temporary workers, many from India, who felt jilted by the immigration agency’s decision last week to withdraw tens of thousands of job-based visas. The State Department announced last month that green cards would be available starting July 2 for applicants across the range of high-skilled categories, but the immigration agency later said there had been a misunderstanding and no visas would be available.

With a more typically American form of protest under way in the courts — the first lawsuits over the about-face were filed last week — an agency spokesman, Dan Kane, would not discuss the complaints behind the flowers.

Vikas Chowdhry, a software developer who helped coordinate the protest, said the flowers had served a good purpose.

“We are overjoyed that these flowers brightened the day of our injured service brethren,” Mr. Chowdhry said. “It is their sacrifice for American freedom that has made this country great and such a desirable destination.”