

# Tech Daily Dose

Politics And Policy in The Wired World

## Immigration

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### Report Analyzes High-Skilled Immigrants

By Juliana Gruenwald

A new [report](#) released Tuesday by the Center for American Progress highlights the importance of high-skilled immigrants to the U.S. economy, but argues that "arbitrary restrictions" keep companies from fully utilizing this talent pool. "Reforming our high-skilled immigration system will stimulate innovation, enhance competitiveness, and help cultivate a flexible, highly-skilled U.S. workforce while protecting U.S. workers from globalization's destabilizing effects," the report said. Among the reforms the report recommends include establishing a market-based mechanism for setting the annual levels of H-1B visas available for skilled foreign workers, raising the green card cap and streamlining the process for obtaining a green card.

The current cap on H-1B visas is set at 65,000 annually with an additional 20,000 available for foreigners who graduate from U.S. schools with master's or doctoral degrees. Unlike past years, the 65,000 cap was not reached this year soon after the fresh batch of visas became available at the start of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1. As of early December, 61,100 of the 65,000 H-1B visas have been applied for, though the cap for the 20,000 supplemental visas has been met, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Industry officials who favor a market-based system for allocating H-1B visas say this year's figures indicate that such a system will work because with the economic downturn, companies have shown less of a need to hire foreign workers. "This report accurately highlights the positive benefits of high skilled immigration to America's economy," Information Technology Industry Council President **Dean Garfield** said in a statement.

The report, however, also addresses a key concern of those who oppose allowing more skilled foreign workers into the United States: bringing in foreign workers, no matter how skilled they are, depresses domestic wages and may hurt Americans' ability to obtain such jobs. "Current enforcement mechanisms are too weak to adequately prevent fraud and gaming of the system," according to the report, which calls for greater focus on targeting employer fraud and abuse, strengthening requirements for companies to seek out U.S. workers before hiring a foreigner and other protections.