

Obama administration to let some high-skilled immigrant spouses work in US

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March 11, 2014: Immigrant rights supporters rally outside the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash. Reuters

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The rule change, which is set to be published in the Federal Register later this week, would affect spouses of as many as 100,000 holders of H-1B high-skilled visas.

"The proposals announced today will encourage highly skilled, specially trained individuals to remain in the United States and continue to support U.S. businesses and the growth of the U.S. economy," said Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker said the rule change would help the U.S. attract and keep "world-class talent" working in the United States.

The new rule is the latest in a series of administrative actions President Barack Obama has announced as efforts to win broad immigration reform in Congress have failed.

Immigration advocates have been pushing Obama to make substantive changes to immigration laws, including halting all deportations until and unless Congress acts on a comprehensive immigration bill. The rule proposed Tuesday would not impact deportations, but could at least partially satisfy requests from the tech industry for the government to make it easier to attract and keep foreign workers trained in science, technology, engineering and math.

The H-1B visas for high-skilled workers are among the most sought-after by high-tech firms. Earlier this year the 85,000 H-1B visas available for 2015 were gobbled up in just a week. The same thing happened last year.

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