

## In The News

### Is it too early to panic about H-4 visa holders' work permits?

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Shareholder Irina Plumlee was quoted in a recent Quartz Magazine article, which discusses H-1B visa holders' work permits.

Recent news reports spelling the end of work permits for dependents of H-1B visa holders maybe creating an uncalled-for panic.

The Donald Trump administration has constantly been threatening to rescind the H-4 employment authorisation document (EAD) rule, which allows spouses of H-1B workers awaiting green cards to seek employment, but no formal announcements have been made yet. The revocation has been under review at the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) since February.

An expiry date is yet to be determined.

"The proposed changes have been discussed for over a year now, what remains to be seen is whether the Trump administration will implement them from this year itself and if they have the political support to manage any fall out from it," said Rogelio Caceres, chief commercial officer and co-founder at LCR Capital Partners, a global EB-5 visa firm.

Despite the blurry timelines, the general sentiment is that there is a sword dangling over the H-4 EADs. The federal agency has really been cracking down on it. Eight meetings have been held between March 08 and May 01, consulting at least 68 entities including H-4 visa holders, tech companies such as Microsoft and Salesforce, as well as immigration lobbying groups like FWD.US, American Bazaar's analysis of OMB documents released on May 27 shows.

#### Stealing or filling jobs?

The current administration makes a case that H-4 workers are stealing American jobs.

But experts say the US economy needs foreign talent. "US companies are in hiring mode and require specialists in multiple fields—most in notably, IT, medicine, research and development, construction, and engineering," immigration expert Irina Plumlee told Quartz. "Foreign workers are often US employers' best chance to fill open positions." STEM fields are especially witnessing a talent crunch.

Plus, research shows the H-4 visa is among the least harmful to American workers. It still puts job seekers on an equal playing field, unlike some other foreign worker programmes that are embedded with government subsidies and ways to circumvent taxes.

"What people need to know is that H4 EAD just gives permission to find work," Sujata Tibrewala, an Intel community development manager and technology evangelist, wrote in a March op-ed. "To go out there, put

themselves in the job market, fight the competition and secure a job is totally the responsibility of an individual. And the struggle to find a foothold is real.”

Tibrewala, an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur graduate who worked as a team lead in CISCO in Bengaluru, came to the US on a dependent visa and worked her way up from the bottom of the ladder in the Bay Area.

In 2015, the Barack Obama administration introduced EADs for H-4 visa holders, which was a boon for many like her, who were until then not able to get even a social security number. Thousands of highly qualified women sitting idle in the US got a chance to revive their skills and careers. Double-income families could afford home loans, car mortgages, children's education, and more, far more easily than they could on one person's salary.

Taking away the H-4 EAD would hurt Indian women like Tibrewala the most. A majority of the over 100,000 H-4 visas issued in total have gone to Indians and nine in 10 to women.

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