

Microsoft loses access to green-card program

White House says firm is under investigation for its hiring practices

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The Trump administration is suspending Microsoft's access to a program that allows skilled foreign workers to apply for permanent residency in the United States, saying the company is under investigation for its hiring practices.

At a news conference on Thursday, Vice President JD Vance said Microsoft would be blocked from using a Labor Department program that allows employers to sponsor skilled workers on H-1B visas for permanent residency, also known as green cards.

Vance framed the move as necessary to protect U.S. workers from unfair wage competition.

"Our message to Microsoft is, you're a great American company, but you've got to hire great American workers," Vance said. "You cannot lay off American workers and then replace them with foreign indentured servants."

Vance did not present evidence that Microsoft had laid off U.S. workers and replaced them with foreign employees through the H-1B program.

The H-1B program, created by Congress in 1990, provides employers with visas for 65,000 skilled foreign workers annually, with an additional 20,000 visas available for workers with advanced degrees from U.S. universities. The visas are prized by tech companies, many of whose leaders say they are critical to success and innovation.

President Donald Trump has targeted the program as part of his crackdown on legal and illegal immigration. His administration issued a proposed regulation in August that seeks to impose a \$103,000 fee on employers seeking H-1B workers after a similar attempt was struck



TED S. WARREN/AP

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down by a federal judge in June.

In addition to Microsoft, Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling said the department was suspending Adobe from sponsoring workers for permanent residency, citing active investigations. The agency also blocked major IT staffing firms Cognizant, Infosys, Tata, Wipro, HCL and Capgemini from participating in the permanent residency program.

It remained unclear why Microsoft and Adobe were under investigation and how long the suspensions might last. The Labor Department did not respond to a request for comment. The White House referred questions to Labor.

Microsoft said in a statement that it was cooperating with the administration and largely used H-1B visas to extend or change the status of existing employees.

"Microsoft only files H-1B petitions for those who meet the rigorous standards of this visa category," the company said. "We pay our employees some of the highest compensation in the tech sector, and our wages are among the highest of all H-1B filings."

Adobe did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Microsoft is among the top users of the H-1B program. The company was approved to hire roughly 3,700 H-1B workers in fiscal year 2026 through June 30 and has had some 54,000 petitions approved over the past decade, according to federal government data.

The suspension does not prohibit Microsoft and Adobe from employing H-1B workers but could make the company a less lucrative destination for workers who hope to obtain permanent residency.

Companies are required to show there are not qualified U.S. workers available to fill a job before sponsoring someone for a green card. Microsoft and Adobe will be blocked from the program used to certify that requirement, essentially stopping them from sponsoring those workers for permanent residence.

The suspensions could also affect Microsoft and Adobe's ability to sponsor permanent resident applications for foreign workers on other types of visas.

Later in the day, Trump pre-

sented Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella with the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, the highest honor given by the U.S. for technological achievement.

Nadella, who was born in India, previously worked in the U.S. on an H-1B visa. He surrendered his U.S. permanent residency in 1994 and applied for the visa so he could bring his wife to the U.S., an unusual immigration story he recounted in his 2017 memoir.

"I went back to the U.S. embassy in Delhi in June of 1994, past the enormous lines of people hoping to get a visa, and told a clerk that I wanted to give back my green card and apply for an H-1B," he wrote in the memoir, called "Hit Refresh."

Nadella later obtained U.S. citizenship, he has said in interviews.

The award presentation was part of the White House's "Science: a New Golden Age" summit. Other tech leaders receiving awards included Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, who has defended the H-1B program in the face of far-right criticism.

DOL Inspector General An-

thony D'Esposito said at the news conference that his office was separately investigating possible improper use of the J-1 visa program for cultural exchange visitors by nine universities, including Brown, Harvard, Stanford and Yale.

D'Esposito did not detail specific allegations.

Multiple universities said they were cooperating with investigations and defended their use of the visa program.

Brian Clark, a spokesperson for Brown University, said they had received a subpoena "for various records pertaining to foreign labor programs" and would respond promptly.

"Brown's international scholars, students and employees make essential contributions on our campus, including to teaching and research that advances American innovation, competitiveness and economic vitality," Clark said.

Federal investigators have issued dozens of subpoenas and executed search warrants as part of their effort to combat fraud in the foreign labor programs, the Labor Department said in September.

For decades, Microsoft has been one of the most vocal supporters of the H-1B visa program on Capitol Hill.

Microsoft founder Bill Gates testified before Congress on the issue in 2008, citing a report that each H-1B worker that technology companies hire creates four or five jobs. In more recent years, the firm has lobbied extensively to expand the program for high-skilled workers.

Doug Rand, a former adviser for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services during the Biden administration, said that if Vance wanted to keep H-1B workers from becoming "indentured servants," he would not be restricting green cards.

"Once you have a green card, you're no longer dependent on your employer for your immigration status," Rand said in a social media post. "You're a permanent resident who can change jobs and negotiate higher wages without fear."