

## *The Washington Times*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

March 15, 2006

#### **Immigrants and wages**

Alfred Tella, citing questionable research, argues, in essence, that the only reason a U.S. employer ever would hire someone on an H-1B visa would be because he or she would work cheaper than Americans, implying that only people born in the United States possess desirable research or technical skills ("Immigration economics ... and flows," Commentary, Monday). The story that a veritable conspiracy exists in America to hire foreign-born professionals so they can work cheaply is unsupported by the evidence.

The report by John Miano that Mr. Tella cites contains a number of flaws. Most important, it uses data that do not reveal what employers actually pay people on H-1B visas. It relies on prevailing wage information alone when, in fact, the actual amount companies pay is much higher. Actual starting salaries for H-1B professionals averaged 22 percent above prevailing wage standards in a sample of H-1B cases selected randomly by a respected law firm for the National Foundation for American Policy.

Our findings are supported by other research. A 2003 study by Madeline Zavodny, a research economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, found that the entry of H-1B professionals neither lowers the contemporaneous earnings of natives nor has "an adverse impact on contemporaneous unemployment rates." Research by Paul E. Harrington, associate director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, shows foreign-born and native professionals earn virtually identical salaries in math and science fields. National Science Foundation data show foreign-born scientists and engineers earn more than natives in some fields.

U.S. companies hire and recruit globally. In some cases, this means hiring foreign-born persons on H-1B temporary visas, many times off U.S. college campuses as part of the normal recruitment process. To deny companies access to these skilled scientists, researchers and specialists is to argue that America should either adopt a closed economic model, a la North Korea, or tell U.S. companies to hire all skilled foreign-born professionals outside the United States and expand operations only in foreign countries.

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