

Employment Situation and Demand for Foreign Workers within the Working Jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Indonesia in Houston

Introduction

In the US, The global economic crisis has pushed the demand for foreign workers down to a significant level in many Industries. It has pressured the government to tighten work based immigration to the US.

Construction and Manufacturing are the two sectors that are most affected by the rising unemployment. Foreign workers's job security are threatened as American workers who lost their job are now more willing to go into that field of works.

Despite those circumstances, demand for foreign workers on several occupations remain relatively high, particularly in those sectors where the domestic worker supply couldn't meet the demand. Those sectors among others are the health and social services; hospitality; as well as oil and gas industry.

Health and Social Services

The demand for foreign workers on health and social services (personal and home care giver, home health aides, registered nurses, medical assistants, etc) in the US will increase over the next decade due to the aging of the baby boomers generation and to the increase of life expectancy among the US population. The number of workers in this field are projected to reach 18,954,000 people on 2016, in which only 85 percent of it could be met by the domestic source, leaving about 2,843,100 labor opportunities open for foreign workers.

Until 2008, within the working jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Indonesia in Houston, which cover ten states namely, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Missisipi, Arkansas, and New Mexico the shortage of American worker supply in the health and social services sector are about 597,000.

For the Registered Nurses in particular, the demand in the US on 2010 will reached at about 2,347,000 RNs on which the domestic source can only supply about 1,941,200 of them. To meet the 17% gap, most hospitals and health institutions have to recruit foreign RNs. At this time most of the recruits are from the Phillipines, India, and China. In 2016 the gap between domestic supply and the number RNs actually needed could reach up to 525,640.

Eventhough there is an obvious shortage of RN, the Government in anticipation of the rising unemployment has made it more difficult for Foreign RNs to enter the US, by increasing the qualifications needed and by making nurses

education for potential American RN in the US more available. There is an ongoing plan that the Government would issue a special visa for Foreign RNs up to 50,000/year. At this time Foreign RN's have to compete with foreign workers on other formal job sectors for the 60,000 per year quota of H-1B visa, intended for skilled and profesional labor on wide ranging sectors.

The measures that the Government of Indonesia have to take in order to boost the deployment of Indonesian RNs to the US, among others are : i. to empower the RNs with the needed skills such English Fluency, and specialization of medical field (heart surgery, plastic surgery, etc) . In addition to that, engaging in a cooperation agreement with US Health Institusions to deploy more Indonesia RNs will enhance their chances.

Hospitality

The demand for foreign workers in the hospitality sector (hotels, cruise ships, restaurant etc) will remain high as well. In the US, the total demand for 2016 are projected to reach 15,017,000 workers in which only 80.5 percent of it able to be met by the domestic source, leaving a 2,252,550 shortage of workers.

Until 2008, within the working jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Indonesia in Houston the demand of foreign workers in the hospityal sector due to this shortage is about 538,784.

The visa issued for workers in this particular field is H-2B Visa intended for seasonal workers in non-agricultural sector. The current quota imposed is about 66,000/year.

Most of the employers in this field would prefer employees with a background of education in hotelier and tourism. A profiency in English is a must.

Oil and Gas Industry

Until 2016 the demand for workers in this field of industry is actually declining to 133.600 from the current workforce of 140,250. Most of the workers are employed by companies located in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and New Mexico, the major energy producing states in the US.

Despite the actual decline, the demand of foreign workers may increased due to the expected shortage of domestic supply of about 30-40 percent within the next 3-4 years, especially for the highly skilled labor. These shortage could be explained by the following reasons :

1. About a quarter of the current employees in this industry will go into retirement;
2. Many of the available highly skilled workers are recruited by the fast growing information technology industry;

3. The relatively high oil prices has boost production and exploration which in turn increase demand for highly skilled workers.

Teachers

The demand for foreign teachers from elementary to post secondary level within the Consulate General's jurisdiction will increase along with the growing number of youth at this study age and due to the shortage of American teachers. Until 2016 the demand for teachers could reach up to 3,803,000 with a projected shortage of 840,000, up from the current level of 700,000 of shortage.

To fill this gap many schools in the US have started to recruit foreign teachers mostly from India and Eastern European countries to teach sciences, maths, and special education for children. For a foreign teacher teach in the US he/she must :

1. Fluent in English (written, verbal, and comprehension);
2. posses a Bachelor Degree (S-1) in Education and in the field that they are going to teach. Those with Graduate Degree (S-2 or S-3) are more preferred;
3. Teaching experience of more than 3 years.

Conclusion

To anticipate the rising number of unemployment in the US and the tight labor market, the US Government has step up its efforts to tighten recruitment process of foreign workers. For Indonesia to deploy more of its skilled migrant workers into the US labor market, there is pressuring needs to enhance their working quality particularly related to their english fluency; and the special skills needed for the field that they pursue.

All planning processes of the deployment of skilled migrant workers have to be prepared well, including in the recruitment process and the language fluency test.

There is also the need to start working on cooperation agreements with the related parties in the US to increase the deployment of Indonesian migrant workers into the US.

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