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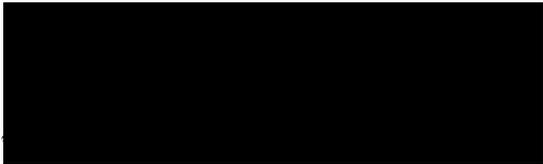
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
20 Mass. Ave., N.W., Rm. A3042
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U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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FILE:



EAC-03-225-52462

Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date: **SEP 20 2005**

IN RE:

Petitioner:

Beneficiary:



PETITION:

Immigrant petition for Alien Worker as a Skilled Worker or Professional pursuant to section 203(b)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The preference visa petition was denied by the Acting Director (director), Vermont Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a nursing home. It seeks to employ the beneficiary permanently in the United States as a cook. As required by statute, a Form ETA 750, Application for Alien Employment Certification approved by the Department of Labor, accompanied the petition. The director determined that the petitioner had not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the beneficiary the proffered wage beginning on the priority date of the visa petition and denied the petition accordingly.

On appeal, counsel submits additional evidence.

Section 203(b)(3)(A)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)(A)(i), provides for the granting of preference classification to qualified immigrants who are capable, at the time of petitioning for classification under this paragraph, of performing skilled labor (requiring at least two years training or experience), not of a temporary nature, for which qualified workers are not available in the United States.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) states, in pertinent part:

Ability of prospective employer to pay wage. Any petition filed by or for an employment-based immigrant which requires an offer of employment must be accompanied by evidence that the prospective United States employer has the ability to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner must demonstrate this ability at the time the priority date is established and continuing until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence. Evidence of this ability shall be in the form of copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements.

The petitioner must demonstrate the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, the day the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing by any office within the employment system of the Department of Labor. See 8 CFR § 204.5(d). Here, the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing on April 18, 2001. The proffered wage as stated on the Form ETA 750 is \$500.00 per week, which amounts to \$26,000 annually. On the Form ETA 750B, signed by the beneficiary, the beneficiary did not claim to have worked for the petitioner.

On the petition, the petitioner claimed to have been established in 1990, to have a gross annual income of \$274,365, and to currently employ 7 workers. In support of the petition, the petitioner submitted the first pages of its Forms 1120, U.S. Corporation Income Tax Returns, for 1999 and 2000¹.

Because the director deemed the evidence submitted insufficient to demonstrate the petitioner's continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, on September 23, 2003, the director requested additional evidence pertinent to that ability. In accordance with 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), the director specifically requested that the petitioner provide copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements to demonstrate its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date. The director specifically requested the petitioner's complete 2001 and 2002 tax returns with all accompanying schedules and attachments and any evidence of wages paid to the beneficiary from the petitioner since 2001.

¹ Evidence preceding the priority date in 2001 is not necessarily dispositive of the petitioner's continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date.

In response, the petitioner submitted evidence that it sought an extension of time to file its 2001 and 2002 tax returns, a handwritten letter from its accountant that she or he could answer questions, and a letter from Fleet bank stating that the petitioner has a balance in the amount of \$12,458.79 in October 2003.

The petitioner's tax returns reflect the following information for the following years:

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>
Net income ²	-\$444	-\$48
Current Assets	\$N/A	\$N/A
Current Liabilities	\$N/A	\$N/A
Net current assets	\$N/A	\$N/A

The director determined that the evidence submitted did not establish that the petitioner had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, and, on March 9, 2004, denied the petition.

On appeal, counsel asserts that the petitioner does have the ability to pay the proffered wage and submits a letter from the petitioner's accountant, Nino Calabrese, who states his or her accounting firm is familiar with the financial records of the petitioner because they have provided accounting and auditing services since 1998 and know that the petitioner has the ability to pay a salary in the amount of \$20,800 per year.

Counsel's reliance on the balance in the petitioner's bank account is misplaced. First, bank statements are not among the three types of evidence, enumerated in 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), required to illustrate a petitioner's ability to pay a proffered wage. While this regulation allows additional material "in appropriate cases," the petitioner in this case has not demonstrated why the documentation specified at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) is inapplicable or otherwise paints an inaccurate financial picture of the petitioner. Second, bank statements show the amount in an account on a given date, and cannot show the sustainable ability to pay a proffered wage. Third, no evidence was submitted to demonstrate that the funds reported on the petitioner's bank statements somehow reflect additional available funds that were not reflected on its tax return, such as cash that is typically specified on Schedule L that will be considered below in determining the petitioner's net current assets³.

In determining the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage during a given period, Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) will first examine whether the petitioner employed and paid the beneficiary during that period. If the petitioner establishes by documentary evidence that it employed the beneficiary at a salary equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the evidence will be considered *prima facie* proof of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. In the instant case, the petitioner did not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary the full proffered wage in 1999, 2000, 2001, or 2002.

If the petitioner does not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary an amount at least equal to the proffered wage during that period, CIS will next examine the net income figure reflected on the petitioner's federal income tax return, without consideration of depreciation or other expenses. Reliance on federal income tax returns as a basis for determining a petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage is well established by judicial precedent. *Elatos Restaurant Corp. v. Sava*, 632 F. Supp. 1049, 1054 (S.D.N.Y. 1986) (citing *Tongatapu Woodcraft Hawaii, Ltd. v. Feldman*, 736 F.2d 1305 (9th Cir. 1984)); see also *Chi-Feng Chang v. Thornburgh*,

² Taxable income before net operating loss deduction and special deductions as reported on Line 28.

³ The petitioner did not provide this Schedule so the AAO cannot assess the petitioner's net current assets.

719 F. Supp. 532 (N.D. Texas 1989); *K.C.P. Food Co., Inc. v. Sava*, 623 F. Supp. 1080 (S.D.N.Y. 1985); *Ubeda v. Palmer*, 539 F. Supp. 647 (N.D. Ill. 1982), *aff'd*, 703 F.2d 571 (7th Cir. 1983). Showing that the petitioner's gross receipts exceeded the proffered wage is insufficient. Similarly, showing that the petitioner paid wages in excess of the proffered wage is insufficient. In *K.C.P. Food Co., Inc. v. Sava*, 623 F. Supp. at 1084, the court held that the Immigration and Naturalization Service, now CIS, had properly relied on the petitioner's net income figure, as stated on the petitioner's corporate income tax returns, rather than the petitioner's gross income. The court specifically rejected the argument that the Service should have considered income before expenses were paid rather than net income.

Nevertheless, the petitioner's net income is not the only statistic that can be used to demonstrate a petitioner's ability to pay a proffered wage. If the net income the petitioner demonstrates it had available during that period, if any, added to the wages paid to the beneficiary during the period, if any, do not equal the amount of the proffered wage or more, CIS will review the petitioner's assets. The petitioner's total assets include depreciable assets that the petitioner uses in its business. Those depreciable assets will not be converted to cash during the ordinary course of business and will not, therefore, become funds available to pay the proffered wage. Further, the petitioner's total assets must be balanced by the petitioner's liabilities. Otherwise, they cannot properly be considered in the determination of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. Rather, CIS will consider *net current assets* as an alternative method of demonstrating the ability to pay the proffered wage. Net current assets are the difference between the petitioner's current assets and current liabilities.⁴ A corporation's year-end current assets are shown on Schedule L, lines 1 through 6. Its year-end current liabilities are shown on lines 16 through 18. If a corporation's end-of-year net current assets are equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the petitioner is expected to be able to pay the proffered wage out of those net current assets.

The petitioner has not demonstrated that it paid any wages to the beneficiary. For the years that it provided regulatory-prescribed evidence (albeit incomplete) of its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage, namely 1999 and 2000, it reported a loss and did not provide schedules L to its corporate tax return that would reflect its net current assets and has not, therefore, demonstrated the ability to pay the proffered wage out of its net income or net current assets. The petitioner has not demonstrated that any other funds were available to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner's accountant's letter submitted on appeal is not a corporate tax return, audited financial statement, or annual report, or other regulatory-prescribed piece of evidence supporting the petitioner's claim that it has the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage, and the evidentiary submissions contained in the record of proceeding contradict the conclusive assertion made by the petitioner's accountant. The petitioner has not, therefore, shown the ability to pay the proffered wage during any relevant year.

The petitioner failed to submit evidence sufficient to demonstrate that it had the ability to pay the proffered wage during any relevant year. Therefore, the petitioner has not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

⁴ According to *Barron's Dictionary of Accounting Terms* 117 (3rd ed. 2000), "current assets" consist of items having (in most cases) a life of one year or less, such as cash, marketable securities, inventory and prepaid expenses. "Current liabilities" are obligations payable (in most cases) within one year, such as accounts payable, short-term notes payable, and accrued expenses (such as taxes and salaries). *Id.* at 118.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.