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FILE: EAC 02 047 50067 Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER Date: APR 15 2004

IN RE: Petitioner: [Redacted]
Beneficiary: [Redacted]

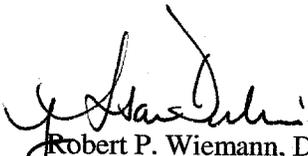
PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

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 service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner is a wholesale and retail trade business that seeks to employ the beneficiary as an entry-level accountant. The petitioner endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101 (a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition because the proffered position is not a specialty occupation. On appeal, counsel submits a brief.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1184 (i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
- (2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
- (3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
- (4) The nature of the specific duties is so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains: (1) Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence; (3) the petitioner's response to the director's request; (4) the director's denial letter; and (5) Form I-290B and supporting documentation. The AAO reviewed the record in its entirety before issuing its decision.

The petitioner is seeking the beneficiary's services as an entry-level accountant. Evidence of the beneficiary's duties includes: the I-129 petition; counsel's November 19, 2001 letter in support of the petition; and the

petitioner's response to the director's request for evidence. According to this evidence, the beneficiary would perform duties that entail: coordinating and supervising the bookkeeping operations; analyzing financial data; preparing balance sheets and profit and loss statements; and preparing miscellaneous financial reports. Counsel indicated that a qualified candidate for the job would possess a bachelor's degree in business administration with coursework in accounting.

The director found that the proffered position was not a specialty occupation because the petitioner had not demonstrated that it required a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in a specific specialty. The director found further that the petitioner failed to establish any of the criteria found at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

On appeal, counsel states, in part, that the proposed duties, which include compiling and analyzing financial information to tender into general ledger accounts, balance sheets, and profit and loss statements, coordinating bookkeeping tasks, and financial analysis, require a qualified and experienced person. Counsel further states that an accountant position clearly qualifies as a specialty occupation.

Upon review of the record, the petitioner has established none of the four criteria outlined in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). Therefore, the proffered position is not a specialty occupation.

The AAO turns first to the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2 (h)(4)(iii)(A)(1) and (2): a baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is the normal minimum requirement for entry into the particular position; a degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations; or a particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree.

Factors often considered by CIS when determining these criteria include: whether the Department of Labor's (DOL) *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)* reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." See *Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 1151, 1165 (D.Min. 1999)(quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Slattery*, 764 F. Supp. 872, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1991)).

The AAO routinely consults the *Handbook* for its information about the duties and educational requirements of particular occupations. CIS does not agree with counsel's assertion that the beneficiary is a "corporate accountant," an occupation that would normally require a bachelor's degree in accounting or a related field. In its *Handbook*, 2002-2003 edition, at page 21, the DOL describes the job of a management accountant as follows:

Management accountants - also called industrial, corporate or private accountants - record and analyze the financial information of the companies for which they work. . . . Usually, management accountants are part of executive teams involved in strategic planning or new-product development. . . . They also prepare financial reports for non-management groups, including stockholders, creditors, regulatory agencies, and tax authorities.

The record reflects that the petitioner, which is a wholesale and retail trade business, employs five persons and has an approximate gross annual income of \$219,413. The business in which the beneficiary is to be employed does not require the services of a corporate accountant who is part of an executive decision-making team. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the position offered includes complex or advanced accounting

duties such as the preparation of detailed financial reports for outside agencies or corporate stockholders, or that the position requires an individual with a knowledge of sophisticated accounting techniques normally associated with the duties of a corporate accountant.

The duties that the petitioner endeavors to have the beneficiary perform are the financial transaction reporting duties, which are similar to the duties that a bookkeeper or accounting clerk would execute in a small business establishment. In contrast to the description of an accountant, at page 390 of the *Handbook*, the DOL describes the positions of a bookkeeper and accounting clerk as follows:

In small establishments, bookkeeping clerks handle all financial transactions and recordkeeping. . . . More advanced accounting clerks may total, balance, and reconcile billing vouchers; ensure completeness and accuracy of data on accounts; and code documents, according to company procedures.

The types of duties the petitioner ascribes to the beneficiary fall primarily within the scope of a bookkeeping or accounting clerk position rather than a management accounting position. For example, the petitioner states that the beneficiary will be responsible for “coordinating and supervising the bookkeeping operations” and “preparing balance sheets and profit and loss statements. . . .” Bookkeeping and routine accounts receivable and payable transactions are not duties normally associated with a corporate accountant. Thus, the petitioner has not shown that a bachelor's degree or its equivalent is required for the position being offered to the beneficiary.

The petitioner also has not shown that it has, in the past, required the services of individuals with baccalaureate or higher degrees in a specific specialty such as accounting, for the offered position. Nor did the petitioner present any documentary evidence that a baccalaureate degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent is common to the industry in parallel positions among organizations similar to the petitioner. It is also noted that the record also does not include any evidence from professional associations regarding an industry standard, or documentation to support the complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position.

Finally, the petitioner did not demonstrate that the nature of the beneficiary's proposed duties is so specialized and complex that the knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

The petitioner has failed to establish that any of the four factors enumerated above are present in this proceeding. The job fits the description of a bookkeeper or accounting clerk, rather than an accountant. According to the DOL at pages 387-388 of the *Handbook*, the usual requirement for a bookkeeping or accounting clerk is a high school diploma or its equivalent. A higher level of training is favored but not required, and such training is available in community colleges or schools of business. Accordingly, it is concluded that the petitioner has not demonstrated that the offered position is a specialty occupation within the meaning of the regulations.

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 sustained that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.