

identifying data deleted to
prevent clearly unwarranted
invasion of personal privacy



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090

U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

PUBLIC COPY



B6

Date: JAN 04 2012

Office: NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER

FILE:

IN RE:

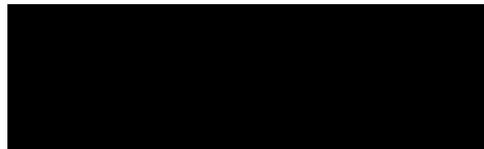
Petitioner:

Beneficiary:



PETITION: Immigrant petition for Alien Worker as an Other, Unskilled Worker pursuant to section 203(b)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

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

The petitioner is a restaurant. It seeks to employ the beneficiary permanently in the United States as a dish washer. As required by statute, the petition is accompanied by a Form ETA 750, Application for Alien Employment Certification, approved by the United States Department of Labor (DOL). 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. The director also determined that the petitioner failed to demonstrate that, on the priority date, the beneficiary had the qualifications stated on its labor certification application. The director denied the petition accordingly.

The record shows that the appeal is properly filed, timely and makes a specific allegation of error in law or fact. The procedural history in this case is documented by the record and incorporated into the decision. Further elaboration of the procedural history will be made only as necessary.

As set forth in the director's September 12, 2008 denial, the primary issue in this case is whether or not the petitioner has the ability to pay the proffered wage as of the priority date and continuing until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence.

Section 203(b)(3)(A)(iii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(3)(A)(iii), provides for the granting of preference classification to other qualified immigrants who are capable, at the time of petitioning for classification under this paragraph, of performing unskilled labor, not of a temporary or seasonal 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 either 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, which is the date the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing by any office within the employment system of the DOL. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(d).

Here, the Form ETA 750 was accepted on November 15, 2002. The proffered wage as stated on the Form ETA 750 is \$7.63 per hour at 40 hours per week (\$15,870.40 per year). The Form ETA 750 states that the position requires zero to three months work experience in the job offered.

The AAO conducts appellate review on a *de novo* basis. *See Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004). The AAO considers all pertinent evidence in the record, including new evidence properly submitted upon appeal.¹

The evidence in the record of proceeding shows that the petitioner is structured as an S corporation. On the petition, the petitioner claimed to have been established in 1985, and that it currently employs 110 workers. It is noted that counsel asserts on appeal that [REDACTED] is a full-service restaurant within the [REDACTED]. According to the tax returns in the record, the petitioner's fiscal year is based on a calendar year. On the Form ETA 750, signed by the beneficiary on November 7, 2002, the beneficiary does not claim to have been employed by the petitioner.

The petitioner must establish that its job offer to the beneficiary is a realistic one. Because the filing of a Form ETA 750 establishes a priority date for any immigrant petition later based on the Form ETA 750, the petitioner must establish that the job offer was realistic as of the priority date and that the offer remained realistic for each year thereafter, until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence. The petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage is an essential element in evaluating whether a job offer is realistic. *See Matter of Great Wall*, 16 I&N Dec. 142 (Acting Reg. Comm. 1977); *see also* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2). In evaluating whether a job offer is realistic, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requires the petitioner to demonstrate financial resources sufficient to pay the beneficiary's proffered wages, although the totality of the circumstances affecting the petitioning business will be considered if the evidence warrants such consideration. *See Matter of Sonogawa*, 12 I&N Dec. 612 (Reg. Comm. 1967).

In determining the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage during a given period, USCIS 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.

It is noted that the social security number (SSN) on the Forms W-2 issued by [REDACTED] to the beneficiary for 2002 through 2009 was [REDACTED]. However, the beneficiary's SSN on Forms W-2 issued by [REDACTED] to the beneficiary in 2006 and 2007 was [REDACTED]. In addition, the petitioner submitted copies of the beneficiary's IRS Forms 1040 for the 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 tax years where the beneficiary indicated his tax identification number was [REDACTED]. No Social Security number was listed. On the Form I-140

¹ The submission of additional evidence on appeal is allowed by the instructions to the Form I-290B, which are incorporated into the regulations at 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(a)(1).

dated July 24, 2007, the petitioner indicated in the box designated for the beneficiary's social security number, "NONE." These multiple inconsistencies and contradictions call into question the petitioner's claimed employment of the beneficiary from 2001 to 2009, and the credibility of the Forms W-2. Doubt cast on any aspect of the petitioner's proof may, of course, lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the remaining evidence offered in support of the visa petition. It is incumbent on the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence, and attempts to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies, absent competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth, in fact, lies, will not suffice. *See Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-592 (BIA 1988). Absent clarification of these inconsistencies in the record, the AAO will not accept the Forms W-2 as persuasive evidence of wages paid to the beneficiary.

The proffered wage is \$15,870.40. The record of proceeding contains copies of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Forms W-2 that were issued by [REDACTED] to the beneficiary as shown in the table below.

- In 2002, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$10,433.67 (a deficiency of \$5,536.73).
- In 2003, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$13,193.44 (a deficiency of \$2,776.96).
- In 2004, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$15,316.15 (a deficiency of \$654.25).
- In 2005, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$17,095.56.
- In 2006, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$18,558.54.
- In 2007, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$19,619.04.
- In 2008, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$21,070.23.
- In 2009, the Form W-2 stated total wages of \$21,049.71.

If, as in this case, the petitioner does not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary an amount at least equal to the proffered wage during that period, USCIS will next examine the net income figure reflected on the petitioner's federal income tax return, without consideration of depreciation or other expenses. *River Street Donuts, LLC v. Napolitano*, 558 F.3d 111 (1st Cir. 2009); *Taco Especial v. Napolitano*, 696 F. Supp. 2d 873 (E.D. Mich. 2010). 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*, 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). Reliance on the petitioner's gross receipts and wage expense is misplaced. 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 USCIS, 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 USCIS should have considered income before expenses were paid rather than net income. See *Taco Especial v. Napolitano*, 696 F. Supp. 2d at 881 (gross profits overstate an employer's ability to pay because it ignores other necessary expenses).

With respect to depreciation, the court in *River Street Donuts* noted:

The AAO recognized that a depreciation deduction is a systematic allocation of the cost of a tangible long-term asset and does not represent a specific cash expenditure during the year claimed. Furthermore, the AAO indicated that the allocation of the depreciation of a long-term asset could be spread out over the years or concentrated into a few depending on the petitioner's choice of accounting and depreciation methods. Nonetheless, the AAO explained that depreciation represents an actual cost of doing business, which could represent either the diminution in value of buildings and equipment or the accumulation of funds necessary to replace perishable equipment and buildings. Accordingly, the AAO stressed that even though amounts deducted for depreciation do not represent current use of cash, neither does it represent amounts available to pay wages.

We find that the AAO has a rational explanation for its policy of not adding depreciation back to net income. Namely, that the amount spent on a long term tangible asset is a "real" expense.

River Street Donuts at 118. "[USCIS] and judicial precedent support the use of tax returns and the net income figures in determining petitioner's ability to pay. Plaintiffs' argument that these figures should be revised by the court by adding back depreciation is without support." *Chi-Feng Chang* at 537 (emphasis added).

The petitioner's 2010 tax return is the most recent return available before the AAO for review. The proffered wage is \$15,870.40. The petitioner's 1120S² tax returns demonstrate its net income as shown in the table below:

² Where an S corporation's income is exclusively from a trade or business, USCIS considers net income to be the figure for ordinary income, shown on line 21 of page one of the petitioner's IRS Form 1120S. However, where an S corporation has income, credits, deductions or other adjustments from sources other than a trade or business, they are reported on Schedule K. If the Schedule K has relevant entries for additional income, credits, deductions or other adjustments, net income is found on line 23 (1997-2003), line 17e (2004-2005), and line 18 (2006-2010) of Schedule K. See Instructions for Form 1120S, at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1120s.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2011) (indicating that Schedule K is a summary schedule of all shareholders' shares of the corporation's income,

- In 2002, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$180,992.00).
- In 2003, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$102,853.00).
- In 2004, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$99,887.00).
- In 2005, the Form 1120S stated net income of \$42,110.00.
- In 2006, the Form 1120S stated net income of \$118,608.00.
- In 2007, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$97,691.00).
- In 2008, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$100,141.00).
- In 2009, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$373,717.00).
- In 2010, the Form 1120S stated net income of (\$200,210.00).

Therefore, for the years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, the petitioner did not have sufficient net income to pay the proffered wage. Although the net income amounts for 2005 and 2006 exceed the proffered wage amounts, USCIS electronic records indicate that the petitioner, doing business as the [REDACTED] has filed multiple immigrant petitions since the 2002 priority date.³ Consequently, USCIS must also take into account the petitioner's ability to pay the beneficiary's wages in the context of its overall recruitment efforts. Presumably, the petitioner has filed and obtained approval of the labor certifications on the representation that it requires all of these workers and intends to employ them upon approval of the petitions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the petitioner to demonstrate that it has the ability to pay the wages of all of the individuals it is seeking to employ. If we examine only the salary requirements relating to the I-140 petitions, the petitioner would need to establish that it has the ability to pay combined salaries of the beneficiaries.

The petitioner must establish that it had sufficient funds to pay all the wages from the priority date and continuing to the present. If the instant petition were the only petition filed by the petitioner, the petitioner would be required to produce evidence of its ability to pay the proffered wage to the single beneficiary of the instant petition. However, where a petitioner has filed multiple petitions for multiple beneficiaries which have been pending simultaneously, the petitioner must produce evidence that its job offers to each beneficiary are realistic, and therefore, that it has the ability to pay the proffered wages to each of the beneficiaries of its pending petitions, as of the priority date of each petition and continuing until the beneficiary of each petition obtains lawful permanent residence.

As an alternate means of determining the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage, USCIS may review the petitioner's net current assets. Net current assets are the difference between the

deductions, credits, etc.). Because the petitioner had additional income, credits, deductions, or other adjustments shown on its Schedule K, the petitioner's net income is found on Schedule K of its tax returns. In the instant matter, the petitioner's Schedule K was used to determine the net income amounts.

³ The record of proceeding shows that [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] a restaurant within the [REDACTED] are one in the same petitioner and share the same address and the same Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) [REDACTED]

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 the total of a corporation's end-of-year net current assets and the wages paid to the beneficiary (if any) are equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the petitioner is expected to be able to pay the proffered wage using those net current assets. The petitioner's tax return demonstrates its net current assets as shown in the table below:

- In 2002, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of \$112,149.00.
- In 2003, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of \$7,569.00.
- In 2004, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$176,998.00).
- In 2005, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$183,098.00).
- In 2006, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$218,583.00).
- In 2007, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$619,333.00).
- In 2008, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$576,447.00).
- In 2009, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$998,121.00).
- In 2010, the Form 1120S stated net current assets of (\$1,154,726.00).

Therefore, the record does not demonstrate that the petitioner had sufficient net current assets in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 to pay the proffered wage. As noted above, although the net current asset amount for 2002 exceeds the proffered wage to the beneficiary, USCIS electronic records indicate that the petitioner has filed multiple immigrant petitions since the 2002 priority date; and therefore, must demonstrate its ability to pay each beneficiary the designated proffered wage amount.

Therefore, from the date the labor certification was accepted for processing by the DOL, the petitioner had not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the beneficiary the proffered wage as of the priority date through an examination of wages paid to the beneficiary, or its net income or net current assets.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that the director's decision was erroneous and that it can pay the proffered wage to the beneficiary.

USCIS may consider the overall magnitude of the petitioner's business activities in its determination of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. See *Matter of Sonogawa*, 12 I&N Dec. 612. The petitioning entity in *Sonogawa* had been in business for over 11 years and routinely earned a gross annual income of about \$100,000. During the year in which the petition was filed in that case, the petitioner changed business locations and paid rent on both the old and new locations for five

⁴According 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 accounts payable, short-term notes payable, and accrued expenses (such as taxes and salaries). *Id.* at 118.

months. There were large moving costs and also a period of time when the petitioner was unable to do regular business. The Regional Commissioner determined that the petitioner's prospects for a resumption of successful business operations were well established. The petitioner was a fashion designer whose work had been featured in *Time* and *Look* magazines. Her clients included Miss Universe, movie actresses, and society matrons. The petitioner's clients had been included in the lists of the best-dressed California women. The petitioner lectured on fashion design at design and fashion shows throughout the United States and at colleges and universities in California. The Regional Commissioner's determination in *Sonegawa* was based in part on the petitioner's sound business reputation and outstanding reputation as a couturiere. As in *Sonegawa*, USCIS may, at its discretion, consider evidence relevant to the petitioner's financial ability that falls outside of a petitioner's net income and net current assets. USCIS may consider such factors as the number of years the petitioner has been doing business, the established historical growth of the petitioner's business, the overall number of employees, the occurrence of any uncharacteristic business expenditures or losses, the petitioner's reputation within its industry, whether the beneficiary is replacing a former employee or an outsourced service, or any other evidence that USCIS deems relevant to the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage.

In this matter, the totality of the circumstances does not establish that the petitioner had or has the ability to pay the proffered wage in the relevant years. There are no facts paralleling those found in *Sonegawa* that are present in the instant matter to a degree sufficient to establish that the petitioner had the ability to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner has not submitted evidence establishing its business reputation. Nor has the petitioner demonstrated the occurrence of any uncharacteristic business expenditures or losses in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010. The petitioner has not submitted evidence to establish that the beneficiary is replacing a former employee whose primary duties were described in the Form ETA 750. Nor has the petitioner established that the beneficiary had the qualifications stated on its labor certification application, as of 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.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.