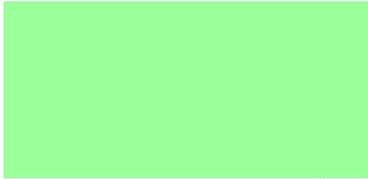




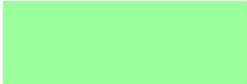
U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

(b)(6)



Date: **APR 04 2012**

Office: NEBRASKA SERVICE CENTER

FILE: 

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:

SELF-REPRESENTED

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 hotel. It seeks to employ the beneficiary permanently in the United States as a handyman. 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 denied the petition accordingly.¹

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 January 12, 2009 denial, the single 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)(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 either in the form of copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements.

¹ The record of proceeding contains no documentation that the individual listed on the Form G-28 as an agent/consultant, [REDACTED] belongs to any category of persons identified at 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(a)(3) as authorized to appear in a representational capacity before USCIS. Further, neither [REDACTED] are listed on the most recent Roster of Recognized Organizations and Accredited Representatives maintained by the Executive Office for Immigration and Review, available on the Internet at <http://www.usdoj.gov> [REDACTED] (accessed on February 24, 2012). Therefore, the AAO does not recognize the agent/consultant listed on Form G-28 in this proceeding.

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, Application for Alien Employment Certification, was accepted for processing by any office within the employment system of the DOL. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(d). The petitioner must also demonstrate that, on the priority date, the beneficiary had the qualifications stated on its Form ETA 750, Application for Alien Employment Certification, as certified by the DOL and submitted with the instant petition. *Matter of Wing's Tea House*, 16 I&N Dec. 158 (Acting Reg'l Comm'r 1977).

Here, the Form ETA 750 was accepted on January 13, 2003. The proffered wage as stated on the Form ETA 750 is \$11.23 per hour (\$449.20 per week or \$23,358.40 per year based on forty hours per week). The Form ETA 750 states that the position requires two years of experience in the job offered as a handyman.

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.²

The evidence in the record of proceeding shows that the petitioner is structured as a C corporation.³ On the petition, the petitioner claimed to have been established on January 5, 2001, to have a gross annual income of \$3,000,000.00 and to currently employ sixty to eighty workers.

The petitioner must establish that its job offer to the beneficiary is a realistic one. Because the filing of an ETA 750 labor certification application establishes a priority date for any immigrant petition later based on the 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'l Comm'r 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

² The submission of additional evidence on appeal is allowed by the instructions to the Form I-290B, which are incorporated into the regulations by the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(a)(1). The record in the instant case provides no reason to preclude consideration of any of the documents newly submitted on appeal. *See Matter of Soriano*, 19 I&N Dec. 764 (BIA 1988).

³ The current petition was filed by [REDACTED] on August 17, 2009. [REDACTED] is also the employer listed on the labor certification of record. However, research conducted in all appropriate databases revealed that the FEIN number listed on Part 1 of Form I-140 belongs to [REDACTED], located at [REDACTED] incorporated on December 6, 1985 in the State of [REDACTED]. No evidence of any relationship between [REDACTED] was submitted.

affecting the petitioning business will be considered if the evidence warrants such consideration. See *Matter of Sonogawa*, 12 I&N Dec. 612 (Reg'l Comm'r 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. On the Form ETA 750B, signed by the beneficiary on December 17, 2002, the beneficiary claimed to have worked for the petitioner as a handyman; however the beneficiary failed to declare the starting date of that employment. In the instant case, the petitioner has not established that it employed and paid the beneficiary the full proffered wage from the priority date January 13, 2003. The record contains copies of the beneficiary's weekly earning statements dated January 25, 2009, evidencing that the beneficiary earned \$388.83 per week from January 25, 2009 to January 30, 2009. This evidence does not establish that the beneficiary was paid the proffered wage or greater from the January 13, 2003 priority date. This evidence demonstrates that the beneficiary was paid less than the proffered wage during the period of January 25, 2009 to January 30, 2009.

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, 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), *aff'd*, No. 10-1517 (6th Cir. filed Nov. 10, 2011). 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 sales and profits and wage expense is misplaced. Showing that the petitioner's gross sales and profits 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 the Service 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).

For a C corporation, USCIS considers net income to be the figure shown on Line 28 of the Form 1120, U.S. Corporation Income Tax Return. 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, USCIS will review the petitioner's net

current assets. 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 and include cash-on-hand. 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 record does not contain the petitioner's annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. The petitioner's failure to provide complete annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements for each year from the priority date is sufficient cause to dismiss this appeal. The petitioner's failure to provide one of the three types of evidence established by the regulations precludes the AAO from analyzing the petitioner's ability to pay based on net current income and net current assets. While additional evidence may be submitted to establish the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage, it may not be substituted for evidence required by regulation.

The record contains a letter dated November 6, 2008, signed by [REDACTED] Certified Public Accountant (CPA) for [REDACTED], stating that "we are the accountants for [REDACTED]⁵ of [REDACTED] and have been so since 1998. During this time we have compiled all financial information and have prepared all required tax returns. We are licensed by the State of [REDACTED] and can state, without hesitation, that [REDACTED] can pay the offered wage of \$449.20 per week." Even though the petitioner's CPA refers to compiled financial information and preparation of the petitioner's tax returns, no copies of this evidence was submitted. Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. 158, 165 (Comm'r 1998) (citing *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg'l Comm'r 1972)). It should be noted that a compiled financial statement is not an acceptable evidence of ability to pay. The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) makes clear that where a petitioner relies on financial statements to demonstrate its ability to pay the proffered wage, those financial statements must be audited. In addition, the signatory of this letter states that they could not supply USCIS with any financial information due to the confidential nature of the information. In sum, the letter from the petitioner's CPA cannot be considered for the purpose of establishing the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage as of the priority date.

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.

⁵ As stated above, no evidence of any relationship between the petitioner and [REDACTED] was submitted.

The petitioner also submitted copies of Forms W2 it issued to [REDACTED] for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2007. The petitioner advised that the Forms W2 provided relate to the salary of a handyman that was previously employed by the petitioner and is no longer employed by the petitioner. In all copies, the name of the employee was erased. On appeal, the petitioner advised that the beneficiary will replace this unnamed employee. The Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) listed on all W2s is [REDACTED]. The copies of the Forms W2 of record show the name of the petitioner and salary as follows:

1999 –	[REDACTED]	\$21,884.56
2000 –	[REDACTED]	\$23,363.50
2001 –	[REDACTED]	\$24,076.66
2002 –	[REDACTED]	\$25,720.75
2003 –	[REDACTED]	\$28,646.30
2006 –	[REDACTED]	\$30,385.55
2007 –	[REDACTED]	\$30,313.92

The petitioner failed to provide the name of this worker, verification of a full-time employment, and evidence that the petitioner has replaced or will replace the employee with the beneficiary. In general, wages already paid to others are not available to prove the ability to pay the wage proffered to the beneficiary at the priority date of the petition and continuing to the present. Moreover, there is no evidence that the position of the W2 worker involves the same duties as those set forth in the ETA 750. The petitioner has not documented the position, duty, and termination of the worker who performed the duties of the proffered position. If that employee performed other kinds of work, then the beneficiary could not have replaced him or her.⁷

Furthermore, research conducted in all available databases revealed that the social security number listed on the Forms W2 of record refers to an individual named [REDACTED]. According to information obtained from public records, [REDACTED] died in 1968. It is questionable whether the individual listed on Forms W2 of record was actually ever employed with the petitioner. This raises doubts about the reliability of the Forms W2. Therefore, the AAO will not consider this evidence to demonstrate the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. Doubt cast on any aspect of the petitioner's proof may, of course, lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the

⁶ The petitioner did not submit any evidence to establish any relationship between itself and [REDACTED] or to explain this inconsistency. 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. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-592 (BIA 1988).

⁷ The purpose of the instant visa category is to provide employers with foreign workers to fill positions for which U.S. workers are unavailable. If the petitioner is, as a matter of choice, replacing U.S. workers with foreign workers, such an action would be contrary to the purpose of the visa category and could invalidate the labor certification. However, this consideration does not form the basis of the decision on the instant appeal.

remaining evidence offered in support of the visa petition. It is incumbent upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence. Any attempt to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies will not suffice unless the petitioner submits competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-92 (BIA 1988).

The petitioner submitted on appeal an appraisal prepared by [REDACTED] dated October 1, 2007. The petitioner also provided a copy of a memorandum of judgment showing the size and value of the business. The petitioner's reliance on the size and value of its business to determine its ability to pay the beneficiary the proffered is misplaced. The petitioner's total assets include depreciable assets that the petitioner uses in its business, including real property. 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, USCIS will consider the size and value of the business as an alternative method of demonstrating the ability to pay the proffered wage.

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 (Reg'l Comm'r 1967). 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 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 *Sonogawa* was based in part on the petitioner's sound business reputation and outstanding reputation as a couturiere. As in *Sonogawa*, 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 the instant case, the evidence of record falls short in determining petitioner's ability to pay as well as prevents the AAO to conduct a totality of the circumstances analysis based on *Sonogawa*. The petitioner has submitted no regulatory prescribed evidence to establish its ability to pay the proffered wage. Thus, it is concluded that the petitioner has not established its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date to present.

An application or petition that fails to comply with the technical requirements of the law may be denied by the AAO even if the Service Center does not identify all of the grounds for denial in the initial decision. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc. v. United States*, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1025, 1043 (E.D. Cal. 2001), *aff'd*, 345 F.3d 683 (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004) (noting that the AAO conducts appellate review on a *de novo* basis).

Beyond the decision of the director, the petitioner has also not established that the beneficiary is qualified for the offered position. The petitioner must establish that the beneficiary possessed all the education, training, and experience specified on the labor certification as of the priority date. 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(1), (12). *See Matter of Wing's Tea House*, 16 I&N Dec. 158, 159 (Acting Reg'l Comm'r 1977); *see also Matter of Katigbak*, 14 I&N Dec. 45, 49 (Reg'l Comm'r 1971). In evaluating the beneficiary's qualifications, USCIS must look to the job offer portion of the labor certification to determine the required qualifications for the position. USCIS may not ignore a term of the labor certification, nor may it impose additional requirements. *See Matter of Silver Dragon Chinese Restaurant*, 19 I&N Dec. 401, 406 (Comm'r 1986). *See also, Madany v. Smith*, 696 F.2d 1008 (D.C. Cir. 1983); *K.R.K. Irvine, Inc. v. Landon*, 699 F.2d 1006 (9th Cir. 1983); *Stewart Infra-Red Commissary of Massachusetts, Inc. v. Coomey*, 661 F.2d 1 (1st Cir. 1981).

In the instant case, the labor certification states that the offered position requires two years of experience as a handyman. On the labor certification, the beneficiary claims to qualify for the offered position based on experience as a: (i) binding machine operator in cotton production, at the [REDACTED] factory, in [REDACTED] from October 1956 to August 1972; and (ii) handyman at the [REDACTED] from December 1974 to December 1976.

The beneficiary's claimed qualifying experience must be supported by letters from employers giving the name, address, and title of the employer, and a description of the beneficiary's experience. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(l)(3)(ii)(A). The record contains a work certificate signed by the Director of the [REDACTED] stating that the beneficiary was employed at that Public School in [REDACTED] as a handyman from September 20, 1972 to December 14, 1974. The work certificate of record is accompanied by a list of duties and hours of work. Even though the beneficiary did not represent any work experience on the labor certification between 1972 and 1974, the dates of employment listed on the work certificate cannot be reconciled with the dates of employment stated on Form 750. 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 upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence. Any attempt to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies will not suffice unless the petitioner submits competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-92 (BIA 1988). Therefore, the petitioner has also failed to establish that the beneficiary is qualified for the offered position.

The petition will be denied for the above stated reasons, with each considered as an independent and alternative basis for denial. In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the

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benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.