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Unhappy New Year for AT&T's Displaced U.S. Tech Workers

Cowardly Congress refuses to protect Americans



Joe Guzzardi, Community Contributor

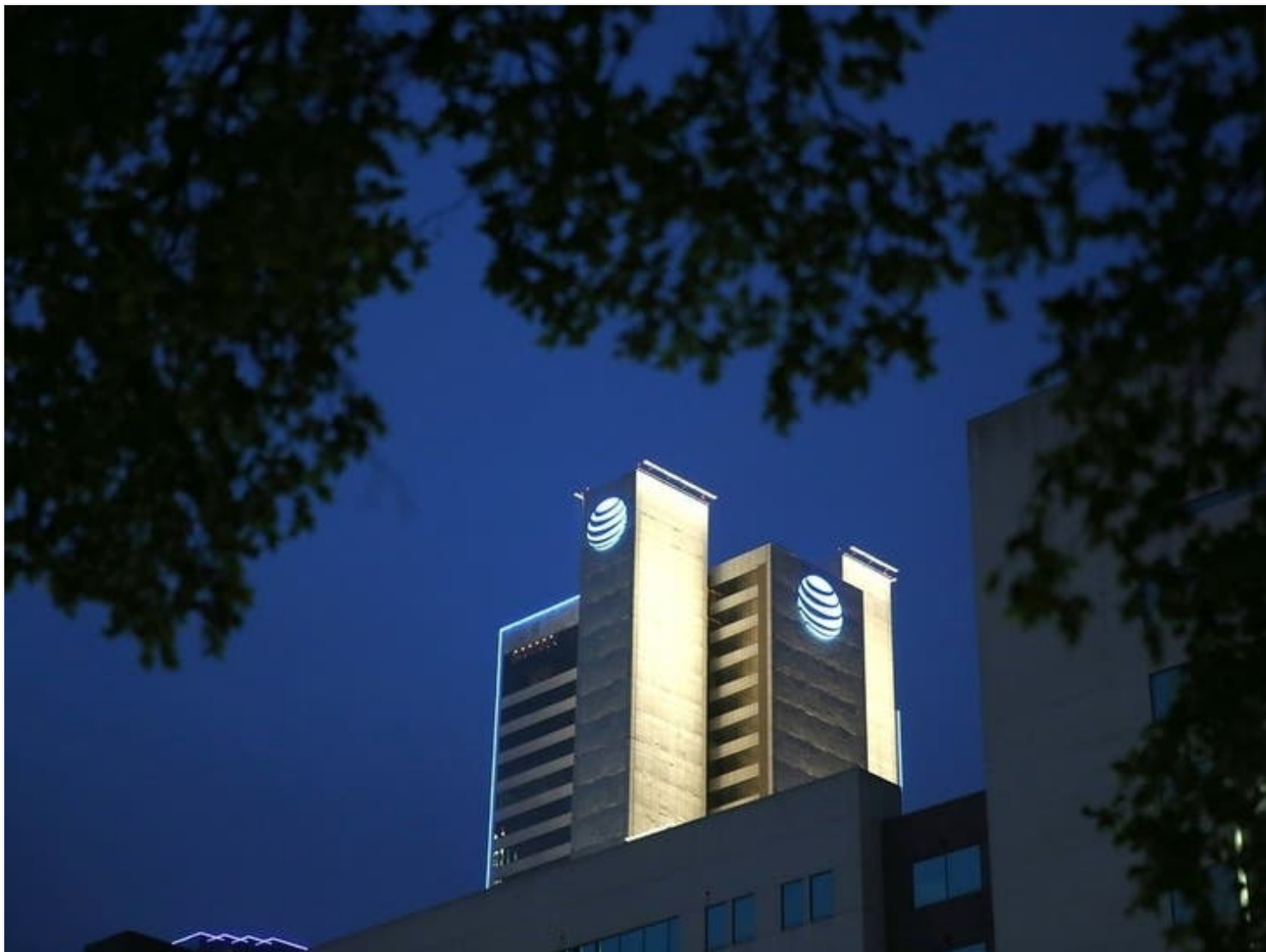
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In a story that has become all too familiar, AT&T announced that it will be laying off its U.S. tech workers. Many of the displaced Americans have been employed for decades. They will struggle to find comparable jobs and may not even find employment. AT&T will replace these American workers with foreign nationals.

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To add insult to the painful injury of being fired during the Christmas season, the outgoing Americans will have to train their H-1B replacements, and aren't being offered severance pay. Corporations call the forced training process "knowledge transfer." But the reality is that if the foreign nationals were as skilled as their employers and advocates claim, they wouldn't need training. The overseas workers have, at best, ordinary skills.

Like many major U.S. companies – Disney, MetLife, IBM, Caterpillar, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Verizon and Bank of America, as well as dozens of others – AT&T has been displacing U.S. tech workers for years. AT&T insiders told Axios, an American news website, that as many as 3,000 finance jobs would be **outsourced to Accenture**, an Ireland-based globalist organization that has 150,000 employees in India.

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U.S. tech workers are deeply disappointed that the Trump administration hasn't acted to save their jobs. But the disappointment and frustration run even deeper. Since the Immigration Act of 1990 created the H-1B and other employment-based visas, administrations haven't acted to save American jobs.

On the campaign trail, candidate Trump talked tough. **His website posted** this now-broken promise: "I will end forever the use of the H-1B as a cheap labor program, and institute an absolute requirement to hire American workers first for every visa and immigration program. No exceptions."

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Instead of meaningful crackdowns, **H-1B usage soared in tech-dependent Silicon Valley** with approval rates for Apple, Facebook and Google reflecting significant increases over past years. For big tech, the millions of dollars spent over the years **lobbying Congress** to continue the H-1B program have paid off handsomely, but have hurt experienced American tech specialists.

The harsh truth is that, despite token improvements by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, every year the federal government issues 85,000 H-1B visas that represent potential job losses for employed U.S. tech workers or job opportunities that young American graduates will be denied because of the ready availability of cheap overseas labor. More than **600,000 H-1B workers** hold U.S. jobs that should go to qualified American college graduates. As a result, said Sara Blackwell, a Florida-based lawyer who represents displaced citizens, "American workers are tired of waiting for President Trump to do something on this issue." Two years ago, CBS' "**60 Minutes**" featured an H-1B exposé which revealed that "more and more [corporations] are taking advantage of loopholes in the law to fire American workers and replace them with younger, cheaper, temporary foreign workers with H-1B visas."

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Given the ready availability of skilled U.S. tech workers and the well documented, long-standing H-1B abuse, the appropriate number of annual visas that should be granted is zero, **a recommendation** former USCIS acting director Ken Cuccinelli made earlier this year.

For AT&T, everything is coming up roses; for its soon-to-be-fired employees, not so much. Last year, AT&T **booked a \$20 billion** paper gain from a federal tax revision that will result in a windfall extra \$3 billion in cash. AT&T recently **raised its quarterly dividend** and has been chosen as one of the best 2020 stock picks, hardly the profile of a company that needs to pinch pennies at the expense of U.S. workers.

Americans deserve to have an equitable chance at getting and keeping jobs located in the U.S. The H-1B visa prevents fairness from playing out.

Joe Guzzardi is a Progressives for Immigration Reform analyst who has written about immigration for more than 30 years. Contact him at jguzzardi@pfirdc.org.

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