The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR NONIMMIGRANT SPOUSES OF TREATY TRADERS AND TREATY INVESTORS

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2277) to provide for work authorization for nonimmigrant spouses of treaty traders and treaty investors.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2277

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR SPOUSES OF TREATY TRADERS AND TREATY INVESTORS.

Section 214(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(6) In the case of an alien spouse admitted under section 101(a)(15)(E), who is accompanying or following to join a principal alien admitted under such section, the Attorney General shall authorize the alien spouse to engage in employment in the United States and provide the spouse with an 'employment authorized' endorsement or other appropriate work permit.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2277.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, today the House is likely to approve, for the fourth and fifth time this year, pro-family, pro-immigrant legislation that we have crafted in the Committee on the Judiciary. This body can be proud of the work it has done upholding the Nation's tradition of welcoming immigrants to our shores in a responsible manner.

This particular bill, H.R. 2277, would allow spouses of E visa recipients to work in the United States while accompanying the primary visa recipients.

E visas are available for treaty traders and investors. A visa is available to an alien who ''is entitled to enter the United States under and in pursuance of the provisions of a treaty of commerce and navigation between the United States and the foreign state of which he is a national . . . solely to carry on substantial trade, including trade in services or trade in technology, principally between the United States and the foreign state of which he is a national, or . . . solely to develop and direct the operations of an enterprise in which he has invested . . . a substantial amount of capital.''

Alien employees of a treaty trader or treaty investor may receive E visas if they are coming to the U.S. to engage in duties of an executive or supervisory character, or, if employed in the lesser capacity, if they have special qualifications that make the services to be rendered essential to the efficient operation of the enterprise. The alien employee would need to be of the same nationality as the treaty trader or investor.

For fiscal year 1998, 9,457 aliens, including dependents, were granted E visas as treaty traders; and 20,775 aliens, including dependents, were granted E vision as treaty investors.

While current law allows spouses and minor children to come to the U.S. with the E visa recipients, spouses are not allowed to work in the United States. Since working spouses are now becoming the rule rather than the exception in our society and in many foreign countries, multinational corporations are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade their employees abroad to relocate to the United States.

Spouses, often wives, hesitate to forego their own career ambitions or a second income to accommodate an overseas assignment. This factor places an impediment in the way of the use by employees from treaty countries of the E visa program and their contributing to trade with and invest in the United States.

There is no good reason why we should put an impediment in the way of the business's effort to attract talented people. There is no good reason why husbands and wives should have to ask their spouses to forego employment as a condition of joining them in America.

Thus H.R. 2277 would simply allow the spouses of E visa recipients to work in the United States while accompanying the primary visa recipient. Families will no longer have to chose between the advancement of either spouse's career in order to grasp an opportunity to come to America.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2277. While current law allows spouses to come to the United States with E visa holders, spouses are not allowed to work in the United States. H.R. 2277 would allow these spouses work authorization in the United States while accompanying the E visa holder.

It does not make any sense whatsoever to allow spouses to accompany their partners to the United States and then deny them the opportunity to be employed. Furthermore, this bill makes the time these families live in the United States financially easier since it allows for a second income.

Madam Speaker, I hope that this bill is the beginning of an understanding that we should allow spouses in other nonimmigrant classifications who accompany their husband or wife to the United States to be able to obtain work authorization.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2277.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR NONIMMIGRANT SPOUSES OF INTRACOMPANY TRANSFEREES

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2278) to provide work authorization for nonimmigrant spouses of intracompany transferees, and to reduce the period of time during which certain intracompany transferees have to be continuously employed before applying for admission to the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2278

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR SPOUSES OF INTRACOMPANY TRANSFEREES.

Section 214(c)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(c)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(E) In the case of an alien spouse admitted under section 101(a)(15)(L), who is accompanying or following to join a principal alien admitted under such section, the Attorney General shall authorize the alien spouse to engage in employment in the United States and provide the spouse with an 'employment authorized' endorsement or other appropriate work permit.''.

SEC. 2. REDUCTION OF REQUIRED PERIOD OF PRIOR CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT FOR CERTAIN INTRACOMPANY TRANSFEREES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 214(c)(2)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(c)(2)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''In the case of an alien seeking admission under section 101(a)(15)(L), the one-year period of continuous employment required

under such section is deemed to be reduced to a 6-month period if the importing employer has filed a blanket petition under this subparagraph and met the requirements for expedited processing of aliens covered under such petition.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 101(a)(15)(L) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(L)) is amended by striking ''an alien who,'' and inserting ''subject to section 214(c)(2), an alien who,''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2278.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill is a companion bill to H.R. 2277, just passed. Just as H.R. 2277 provides employment authorization to spouses of E visa recipients, this bill provides employment authorization to spouses of L visa recipients.

L visas are available for intracompany transferees. They allow employees working at a company's overseas branch to be shifted to the company's work site in the United States.

An L visa is available to an alien who ''within 3 years preceding the time of his application for admission into the United States has been employed continuously for one year by a firm or an affiliate or subsidiary and who seeks to enter the United States temporarily in order to continue to render his services to the same employer in a capacity that is managerial, executive or involves specialized knowledge.''

To make the L visa program more convenient for established and frequent users of the program, blanket L visas are available. If an employer meets certain qualifications, such as having received approval for at least 10 L visa professionals during the past year or having U.S. subsidiaries or affiliates with an annual combined sales of at least $25 million or having a workforce of at least 1,000 employees, the employer can receive preapproval for an unlimited number of L visas from the Immigration Service.

□ 1530

Individual aliens seeking visas to work for the companies simply have to show that the job they will be employed in qualifies for the L visa program and that they are qualified to do the job.

In fiscal year 1998, 38,307 aliens, along with 44,176 dependents, were granted L visas.

While the current law allows spouses and minor children to come to the U.S. with the L visa recipients, spouses are not allowed to work in this country. As I stated in regard to H.R. 2277, working spouses are now becoming the rule rather than the exception in the U.S. and in many foreign countries, and multinational companies are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade their employees abroad to relocate to the United States if it means their spouses will have to forgo employment. This factor places an impediment in the way of these employers' use of the L visa program and their competitiveness in the international economy.

There is no good reason why we should put an impediment in the way of business and academia's efforts to attract talented people. There is also no good reason why husbands and wives should have to ask their spouses to forgo employment as a condition of joining them in America. Thus, H.R. 2278 would allow the spouses of L visa recipients to work in the United States while accompanying the primary visa recipients.

Additionally, the current law requires that the beneficiary of an L visa have been employed for at least 1 year overseas by the petitioning employer. In many situations, this is an overly restrictive requirement. For example, consulting agencies often recruit and hire individuals overseas with specialized skills to meet the needs of particular clients. The 1-year-prior-employment requirement can result in long delays before they can bring such employees into the United States on an L visa. A shorter prior employment period would allow companies to more expeditiously meet the needs of their clients.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 2278 would allow aliens to qualify for L visas after having worked for 6 months overseas for employers if the employers have filed blanket L petitions and have met the blanket petition's requirements. There is a high level of fraud in the L visa program, especially involving ''front companies'' set up purely to procure visas; and lowering the across-the-board qualifications for the L visas might encourage more fraudulent petitions. With a company that has been prescreened and approved for the ''blanket'' L visa status, the risk of fraud is much lower.

Thus, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2278. This is a positive bill because it allows work authorization for nonimmigrant spouses of intracompany transferees.

Not only will spouses be able to accompany their husband or wife who is in the United States in a nonimmigrant capacity, but these spouses will now be afforded the opportunity to be employed. It makes no sense to allow spouses to accompany their loved ones to the United States and then deny them the opportunity to be employed.

Global companies are finding it increasingly difficult to relocate foreign nationals to the United States. This bill makes relocation easier since spouses will not have to forgo their career, ambitions or a second income, which is increasingly necessary.

This bill is also positive since it contains a 6-month reduction in the period of time during which certain intracompany transferees have to be continuously employed before applying for admission to the United States. Without this bill, companies who recruit and hire individuals overseas with specialized skills to meet the needs of their clients will be able to bring these employees more expeditiously.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2278.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL NEW QUESTIONS OF PATENTABILITY IN REEXAMINATION PROCEEDINGS

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1866) to amend title 35, United States Code, to clarify the basis for granting requests for reexamination of patents, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1866

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL NEW QUESTION OF PATENTABILITY IN REEXAMINATION PROCEEDINGS.

Sections 303(a) and 312(a) of title 35, United States Code, are each amended by adding at the end the following: ''The existence of a substantial new question of patentability is not precluded by the fact that a patent or printed publication was previously cited by or to the Office or considered by the Office.''.

SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this Act shall apply with respect to any determination of the Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office that is made under section 303(a) or 312(a) of title 35, United States Code, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and