

# Gates Asks U.S. Senate Panel To Ease Skilled-Worker Visas

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WASHINGTON -- [Microsoft](#) Corp. Chairman Bill Gates warned a U.S. Senate panel Wednesday that America's myopia threatens the nation's economic future.

"We are failing to live up to our obligation to make the investments needed to make sure that the U.S. remains competitive in the future," Mr. Gates testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee. "Our economic future is in peril."

Mr. Gates said the U.S. should loosen immigration rules for educated workers, should strengthen math and science education, and should invest more in research and development.

The US currently limits the number of highly-skilled workers allowed into the country on temporary H1-B visas. Mr. Gates suggested that the restriction should be lifted entirely.

"We face a critical shortage of scientific talent," he said, adding that such shortages are hurting Microsoft and other companies.

The only significant disagreement from the panel came on the question of whether the U.S.'s attraction of the "best and brightest" might be hurting the countries from which these workers are attracted.

Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said the issue is particularly important in the case of doctors and nurses coming from countries where health-care challenges may be high.

Mr. Gates said a worker's mother country is helped when that worker sends home some of his or her wages to remaining family members. He also said that countries with health problems would be better served by greater investment in health care and not by trying to prevent their health-care professionals from moving abroad.

Senators at the hearing greeted Mr. Gates warmly, eagerly praising him for his successes and the work of a charitable foundation. A half-dozen or so of them even ditched an address to Congress by Jordan's king to instead question and address Mr. Gates.

His Majesty King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was giving a speech to the jointly assembled members of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

