

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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H-1B Tech Staffing Company Owner Sentenced To Prison For Collecting Illegal Filing Fees From Visa Recipients

Ramesh Venkata Pothuru, who collected over \$450,000 in illegal filing fees and related expenses from more than 100 fraudulent visas and employer-sponsored green cards for nonimmigrant workers from his native India, was sentenced Thursday to one year and one day in prison by U.S. District Judge John R. Padova.

On January 9, Pothuru, former owner and operator of Virgo Inc. and Isync Solutions, Inc., pled guilty to wire fraud and visa fraud for his role in the scheme.

The investigation disclosed that between 2010 and 2013, Pothuru collected hundreds of thousands of dollars in filing fees from workers he was sponsoring under the H-1B nonimmigrant worker visa program. Federal regulations prohibit employers from soliciting payments from H-1B nonimmigrant workers to cover the costs associated with filing fees, which fees are required by law to be borne by the sponsoring U.S. employer. In addition, many of the H-1B nonimmigrant workers were also recipients of employer-sponsored permanent foreign labor certification applications filed by Pothuru with the Department of Labor. Permanent foreign labor certification filings typically involve costs of over several thousand dollars in addition to the filing fees; Pothuru unlawfully collected both from the employees.

Pothuru collected these illegal fees and expenses from the employees he sponsored for H-1B visas and green cards through direct payments to his personal bank accounts. He subsequently submitted false applications in which he did not identify the fees that he collected from the nonimmigrant workers and swore that he did not collect.

“The defendant not only collected hundreds of thousands of dollars from these nonimmigrant workers, but he also made millions by operating his fraudulent business based on workers who received these visas,” said U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain. “The defendant took advantage of these workers from his home country and also undermined the integrity of the H-1B visa and green card programs. This sentence serves both as a deterrent and as protection from a defendant who has already demonstrated a stunning disregard for the law.”

“The Diplomatic Security Service is firmly committed to making sure that those who commit visa fraud face consequences for their criminal actions,” said Joseph S. Ugarte, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service, New York Field Office (“DSS”). “The strong relationship we enjoy with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and other law enforcement agencies around the world is vital towards ensuring the integrity of U.S. travel documents and protecting greater U.S. interests.”

This is a joint investigation with U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Jordan.