USCIS has officially opened the electronic H1B cap registration process for fiscal year 2027. This initial step allows employers to register prospective workers electronically before filing a full H1B petition. The process consists of two stages: first, submitting an electronic registration during the open window; second, if selected, filing the complete H1B petition within the designated USCIS filing window.

What It Means When USCIS Says Registration Is Open

When registration opens, it does not mean that all employers can immediately file full H1B petitions. Instead:

- U.S. employers may submit electronic registrations for specific prospective workers.
- USCIS uses these registrations to conduct the cap selection lottery.
- Only registrations selected in this lottery can proceed with full petition filings.

This system applies to cap-subject H1Bs subject to annual numerical limits. Cap-exempt cases—such as those involving certain higher education institutions or nonprofit research organizations—do not use this registration system and may file petitions year-round if qualified.

Recent regulatory updates aimed at modernizing H-1B requirements highlight the importance of staying informed about evolving procedures.

Understanding FY2027 in H1B Terms

Fiscal Year 2027 begins on October 1, 2026. An approved FY2027 H1B petition typically authorizes employment starting from that date under the standard cap season timeline.

Eligibility to Submit a Registration

Only the prospective employer may submit an electronic registration for a specific beneficiary through their USCIS online account. Workers or third parties cannot independently submit registrations. Each registration is unique to one employer-beneficiary pair.

Multiple unrelated employers may register the same beneficiary, but a single employer cannot submit multiple registrations for the same individual within the same fiscal year. Duplicate submissions risk denial or revocation, as USCIS actively prevents gaming of the system.

Fees and Budgeting Considerations

USCIS charges a non-refundable fee per registration submitted by each employer for each beneficiary annually. Fee amounts

may vary due to regulatory adjustments and official announcements.

Employers should budget not only for registration fees but also for:

- Legal assistance in preparing and reviewing registrations
- Filing fees for full petitions if registrations are selected
- Potential premium processing fees if expedited adjudication is desired and available

The Selection Process Explained

After the registration period closes, USCIS conducts a random selection lottery from submitted registrations. Some years may require additional selection rounds depending on how many selected registrants proceed with filings and how many petitions are approvable, though multiple rounds are not guaranteed.

Selected registrants receive notifications via their USCIS online accounts specifying filing windows. Missing these deadlines forfeits eligibility for that fiscal year with no extensions granted.

Recommended Employer Actions Prior to Selection Results

To avoid common pitfalls:

- Confirm job offer details including title, duties, worksite location, and wage plans meet Department of Labor requirements.
- Verify candidate eligibility and degree qualifications early, especially when claiming advanced degree exemptions.
- Collect immigration status documentation such as transcripts, diplomas, I-20 forms for F-1 students, OPT/CPT records, EAD cards, and travel histories.
- Consult legal counsel regarding any prior immigration issues without delay.
- Decide upfront whether consular processing or change of status is preferred for the candidate.

Steps After Selection

Upon selection notification, employers must promptly file:

- Certified Labor Condition Application (LCA)
- Form I-129 with appropriate supplements
- Supporting letters and evidence demonstrating specialty occupation and candidate qualifications

- All required fees
- Premium processing requests if applicable and desired

While premium processing can accelerate adjudication timelines when available, it does not alter the October 1 employment start date for change of status cases under the cap.

Selection only grants permission to file; it does not guarantee petition approval.

Clarification on “New Rules” and Media Headlines

News headlines often conflate updates about registration windows, fee changes, and wage rule proposals.

It is important to differentiate between:

- Official USCIS announcements regarding registration windows and selection procedures
- Current regulations and fee schedules in effect
- Proposed rules or rumors yet to be implemented

Decisions should be based on official sources rather than speculative media reports.

Key Takeaways for Employers

Treat the registration phase as the formal beginning of an H1B case rather than a mere lottery entry.

Ensure clarity regarding job roles, wages, and worksites before registering candidates. Prepare thorough documentation early so that if selected, filings can be submitted quickly and accurately.

Seeking expert review of job descriptions, worksite locations, and candidate statuses can help identify risks before investing time and expenses in petition preparation.