

The US Senate today approved a substantial increase in application fees for H1B and L1 visas, to fund a \$ 600 million emergency package to improve security along the porous Mexican border.

This \$2,000 increase will be added to the existing \$320 H-1B filing fee. There are a number of other add-on fees as well: a \$500 anti fraud fee that is required for any new H-1B and L-1 visa user, and a fee for training U.S. workers that scales from \$750 to \$1,500, depending on the size of the company applying for a visa.

Many companies also pay \$1,000 extra for what's called premium processing to accelerate handling of the visa. And legal fees can run as high as \$2,000.

The proposed massive increase in H-1B and L1 visa application fee would primarily affect the top Indian IT companies who rely majorly on these categories of visas to continue with their work in the US. The Senate measure increases the visa fee by \$ 2,000 per application on those companies that have less than 50 percent of their employees as American citizens.

Many US companies such as Microsoft and Google also hire many H-1B visas holders, but they are relatively a smaller fraction of their U.S. workforces.

But this need to be seen how much additional money will be generated with this increase when H1 and L1 visa popularity is already on decline. The U.S. has only received 35,000 petitions out of 85,000 visas available this year.