

Change in H-1B visa program won't impact Barton

By Kathryn Reed

Barton Memorial Hospital is not part of the trend of rural hospitals relying on foreign doctors to provide medical care.

That's a good thing since President Trump on April 18 is expected to change the rules for obtaining H-1B visas in what he is calling "Buy American, Hire American." It used to be that for \$1,225 an employer could get an application approved in a matter of weeks instead of the customary monthslong wait.

Each year about 85,000 H-1B visas are granted.

"H1-B visas give health systems the flexibility to hire international employees who have the medical skills or qualifications they seek when there is a shortage of that talent locally," Clint Purvance, president and CEO of Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Typically, H1-B visas recipients are recruited by health systems with education or training programs, or by a health system unable to fill a position in an isolated area or for very specialized service."

According to the *New York Times*, foreigners make up nearly 25 percent of all physicians in the United States, with those percentages being even higher in most rural areas. The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates said in December 2015 there were 211,460 international medical graduates practicing in the United States.

"We are currently not contracted with any physicians who are H1-B recipients and it is unlikely changes to the H1-B visa program will impact us," Purvance said. "All Barton Health physicians are qualified and experienced care providers who have trained in the United States or U.S. territories."

The only employee in the Barton Health system with a H1-B visa is a clinical lab scientist. She did not want to be interviewed by *Lake Tahoe News*.