

Ski industry lobbying for more immigration

By Megan Michelson, Powder

Urh Vodopivec is a 24-year-old ski instructor and student from Slovenia. He's been traveling to Tahoe the last two summers to work seasonal jobs at restaurants. He's one of about 300,000 people, many of whom are college students, visiting the U.S. each year on J-1 visas, which are designed as cultural exchange work permits for short-term foreign visitors.

"I would love to come back in the winter to teach skiing," says Vodopivec. "But right now, it's too hard to get a visa."

Ski towns rely heavily on these visas to fill seasonal jobs—an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 J-1 workers are employed at ski resorts nationwide each winter, according to the National Ski Areas Associations. Yet tightening governmental restrictions on foreign visas may make it harder for ski resorts and other ski town employers to continue hiring these short-term international employees.

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