



Durbin, Leahy Introduce New Legislation to Increase Number of Green Cards Available, Eliminating the Backlog

October 17 2019 9:31 AM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), former Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today introduced new legislation that would eliminate the family and employment green card backlog by increasing the number of green cards. Close to four million future Americans are on the State Department’s immigrant visa waiting list, in addition to hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the U.S. who are also waiting for green cards. However, under current law only 226,000 family green cards and 140,000 employment green cards are available annually. Children and spouses of lawful permanent residents (LPRs) count against these numbers, further restricting the number of available green cards.

“One of the most serious problems in our broken immigration system is that there are not nearly enough green cards available each year. As a result, immigrants are stuck in crippling backlogs for many years,” Durbin said. “The solution to this backlog is clear: increase the number of green cards. I’m proud to introduce this commonsense legislation to finally eliminate the family and employment green card backlog.”

“America at its core is a nation of immigrants, but too often our outdated immigration laws close doors to those who would make enormous contributions to our communities and economy. The mismatch between the supply and demand for green cards has left millions of immigrant families in legal limbo, stuck in a years-long backlog waiting for the chance to contribute to our nation,” Leahy said. “This commonsense legislation — the crux of which was contained in comprehensive immigration reform, which overwhelmingly passed the Senate in 2013 — would eliminate this backlog and is long overdue.”

Along with eliminating the family and employment green card backlog over five years, the *Resolving Extended Limbo for Immigrant Employees and Families (RELIEF) Act* would also help keep American families together by classifying spouses and children of LPRs as immediate relatives and exempting derivative beneficiaries of employment-based petitions from annual green card limits, protect “aging out” children who qualify for LPR status based on a parent’s immigration petition, and lift country caps.

The bill is endorsed by national organizations representing impacted communities, including: All of Us; American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (Order of AHEPA); Ancient Order of Hibernians; Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. (IEEE)-USA; National Iranian American Council Action; South Asian Americans Leading Together; United Chinese Americans; United Macedonian Diaspora; and United We Dream.

Specifically, the *RELIEF Act* will:

- Eliminate the family and employment green card backlog over five years in the order in which applications were filed;
- Keep American families together by classifying spouses and children of lawful permanent residents (LPRs) as immediate relatives and exempting derivative beneficiaries of employment-based petitions from annual green card limits;
- Protect “aging out” children who qualify for LPR status based on a parent’s immigration petition;
- Lift country caps; and,
- Extend the “hold harmless” clause from H.R. 1044 that exempts immigrant visa petitions approved prior to enactment from the lifting of country caps to petitions approved for five years after enactment.