



Durbin Announces Bipartisan Agreement To Help Immigrant Workers Stuck In The Green Card Backlog

December 19 2019 10:24 AM

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, today joined Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) on the Senate floor to announce their bipartisan agreement to amend Lee’s *Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act*.

“Senator Lee and I have reached a bipartisan agreement on what we think is a reasonable approach... these families affected by this backlog are really going through hardship and concerns that no family should face. The sooner we resolve them, the better,” Durbin said. “As I’ve talked to many of these families, they said ‘why don’t you sit down with Senator Lee and see if you can reach an agreement?’ I did. We have. Now I hope we can move forward.”

The Lee-Durbin agreement would make three changes to the *Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act*. First, it would protect immigrants and their families who are stuck in the backlog. Immigrant workers and their immediate family members would be eligible for “early filing” for their green cards. Immigrant workers would be able to switch jobs and travel without losing their immigration status. The amendment includes a critical protection from Durbin’s *RELIEF Act*, which would protect the children of immigrant workers from “aging out” of green-card eligibility so they will not face deportation while they are waiting for a green card.

Second, the amendment would create a green-card set aside for immigrant workers stuck in the backlog overseas. The amendment would reserve 4,600 green cards on an annual basis for immigrant workers who are stuck in the backlog overseas and not eligible for early filing. This number is based on the approximate number of people who apply for employment green cards from overseas each year.

Finally, the amendment would address abuse of H-1B temporary work visas by prohibiting a company from hiring additional H-1B workers if the company's workforce is more than 50 employees and more than 50 percent temporary workers. This commonsense bipartisan reform would stop outsourcing firms from abusing the H-1B visa to exploit immigrant workers and offshore American jobs.

Video of Durbin's remarks on the Senate floor are available [here](#).

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Footage of Durbin's remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#) for TV Stations.

Durbin also explained that ultimately Congress must increase the number of green cards to eliminate the green-card backlog. In October, Durbin, along with Senators Pat Leahy (D-VT) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI), introduced the [*Resolving Extended Limbo for Immigrant Employees and Families \(RELIEF\) Act*](#), which would eliminate the family and employment green card backlog by increasing the number of green cards. The *RELIEF Act* would also help 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, and lift country caps.

In October, Durbin, along with all Senate Judiciary Committee Democrats, [called on](#) Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee, to hold a hearing on legislation to address green-card backlogs.

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 LPRs count against these numbers, further restricting the number of available green cards.