

There is No Immigration “Line”

Backlogs are overwhelming; immigrants could wait decades unless broken system is fixed

Both the frameworks released by the Senate Bipartisan Committee and President Obama in January of 2013 propose that in addition to clearing background checks, paying back taxes and penalties, and learning English, applicants must go to the “back of the line” to earn citizenship. Unfortunately, the current system includes a vast number of complex roads to citizenship and some of the most common are backed up for decades.

Many Lines, Some Lead to Dead Ends:

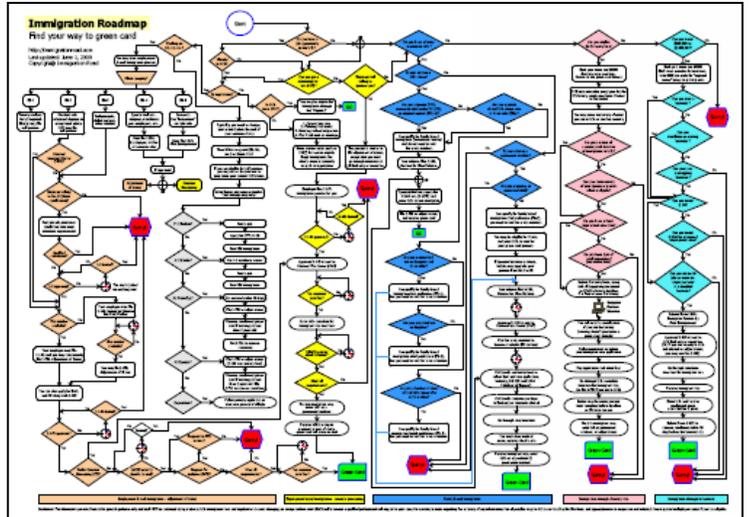
Prospective immigrants must enter one of many lines, depending on country of origin, family relationships in the U.S., and occupation or education, with different quotas of visas per year. It is nearly impossible to obtain a visa without family members or an employer willing to sponsor the immigrant. Immigrants who fall into the most common family and employment categories face overwhelming delays, leading many to risk their lives crossing the border through the desert.

Visa Applicants Face Endless Backlogs:

The most common path, the family visa, has a backlog of 4.3 million people.¹ Some have been waiting to be reunified with parents and siblings for decades.² For example, siblings of U.S. citizens from the Philippines face a 24 year backlog. This means a 30 year old Filipina woman next in line would have been waiting to join her brother in the United States since the age of 6.

Projected Future Backlogs Are Much Worse:

The current backlogs posted by the State Department are based on demand for visas exceeding quotas years ago. Since then, many lines have become much longer. An immigrant at the front of a family reunification line today from Mexico may have been waiting 20 years. But an immigrant joining the back of one of these lines today may not live long enough to see a visa. There are 1.3 million people from Mexico currently waiting to be reunified with their family. The annual limit for family visas is 15,820 per country.³ At this rate, those already in the back of this line will be waiting for 83 years. Adding 11 million people to these backlogs is an unworkable solution. If 1,000 applicants per day are processed, it would take an additional 30 years for all 11 million to earn legal residency.



	China	India	Mexico	Philippines
Unmarried Adult Children of U.S. Citizens	8 Year Backlog	8 Year Backlog	20 Year Backlog	16 Year Backlog
Spouses and Minor Children of Permanent Residents	3 Year Backlog	3 Year Backlog	3 Year Backlog	3 Year Backlog
Unmarried Adult Children of Permanent Residents	9 Year Backlog	9 Year Backlog	21 Year Backlog	11 Year Backlog
Married Adult Children of U.S. Citizens	11 Year Backlog	11 Year Backlog	20 Year Backlog	21 Year Backlog
Siblings of U.S. Citizens	12 Year Backlog	12 Year Backlog	17 Year Backlog	24 Year Backlog

If undocumented immigrants are sent into the current immigration system without a major overhaul, many will die of old age before reaching their dreams of American citizenship. Proposed reforms include raising per-country annual quotas, capping wait times to five years, and recapturing unused visas from prior years. Demanding that millions of people living in America go to the back of a broken line is a broken promise. Real immigration reform must have a fair and attainable pathway to citizenship.

¹ Department of State Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants 2012

² Department of State Visa Bulletin January 2013, data compiled by CAUSE

³ Department of State Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants 2012