

Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy Act (RAISE Act)

A Bill to Raise Working Wages & Boost American Competitiveness

The Problem with Our Immigration System

Our immigration system isn't designed for the 21st century. The world is moving toward a knowledge and innovation economy. But only 1 out of every 15 U.S. immigrants come here because of their skills, and we do not prioritize the ultra high-skilled immigrants who spur innovation, create jobs, and make America more competitive. At the same time, the United States accepts 1 million immigrants annually—the equivalent of adding the entire state of Montana each year—and most are low- or unskilled. A generation-long influx of low-skilled immigrant labor has put downward pressure on the wages of working Americans, with recent immigrants' wages hardest hit. For Americans who didn't finish high school, wages have dropped nearly 20 percent since the 1970s. This collapse in working-class wages threatens to create a near-permanent underclass for whom the American Dream is just out of reach.

The RAISE Act Solution

The Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy Act (RAISE Act) would spur economic growth and help raise working Americans' wages ending chain migration, giving priority to the most skilled immigrants from around the world, and reducing overall immigration by half. Specifically, the RAISE Act would:

Establish a Skills-Based Points System. The RAISE Act would replace the current permanent employment-visa framework with a skills-based points system, akin to the systems used by Canada and Australia. The system would prioritize those immigrants who are best positioned to succeed in the United States and expand the economy. Applicants earn points based on education, English-language ability, high-paying job offers, age, record of extraordinary achievement, and entrepreneurial initiative.

Prioritize Immediate Family Households. The RAISE Act keeps immigration preferences for the spouses and minor children of U.S. residents, encouraging the unification of nuclear families. It eliminates preferences for extended family and grown adult family members of U.S. residents. For U.S. citizens who need to bring elderly parents to the United States for caretaking purposes, the bill creates a renewable temporary visa for such parents.

Eliminate the Outdated Diversity Visa Lottery. The Diversity Lottery is plagued with fraud, advances no economic or humanitarian interest, and does not even promote diversity. It is an arbitrary way to distribute the precious privilege of U.S. citizenship, and the RAISE Act would eliminate it.

Place a Responsible Limit on Permanent Residency for Refugees. The RAISE Act would limit refugees offered permanent residency to 50,000 per year, in line with a 13-year average.

The RAISE Act's Impact

An America That's More Competitive in the World. Immigrants coming here on skills-based visas will be better educated, more skilled, more fluent in English, have more working-age years ahead of them, and have a stronger entrepreneurial spirit. They will have a greater shot at becoming successful Americans, which will work to the benefit of all Americans in the form of an expanded and more competitive economy.

Rising Wages for Working Americans. According to immigration-projection models based on the work of Princeton and Harvard professors, the RAISE Act would lower overall immigration to 637,960 in its first year—a 41 percent drop—and to 539,958 by its tenth year—a 50 percent reduction. The RAISE Act will stem the flow of low-skill immigrants into the United States, reduce our country's oversupply of low- and unskilled labor, and lead to an increase in wages for working Americans, who are long overdue for a raise.