

ALERTS

Trump Backs Legislation to Reduce Legal Immigration Rates

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On August 2, 2017, President Donald Trump announced his support for the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment ("RAISE") Act, introduced by Republican Senators Tom Cotton (AR) and David Perdue (GA).

The bill, in its current form, aims to halve the number of people who receive legal permanent residence ("green cards") over a decade and purports to move the United States to a "merit-based" immigration system.

Within the current system, foreign nationals may seek to qualify for permanent residency via one of the following methods: (1) an employment-based petition sponsored by a U.S. employer; (2) a family-based petition sponsored by a family member such as a U.S. citizen spouse; or (3) the State Department's Diversity Visa program, also known as the "green card lottery".

The RAISE Act proposes the following changes to the current system:

- Elimination of immigration preferences currently given to siblings, adult parents, and adult children of US Citizens seeking green cards (minor children and spouses would still be eligible to apply for green cards);
- A cap on the number of accepted refugees at 50,000 (approximately half of the Obama administration's 2017 target);
- Elimination of the State Department's Diversity Visa program; and
- Creation of a point system based on factors such as English ability, education level, and job skills to rank applicants for the approximately 140,000 employment-based green cards issued annually.

We stress that this is pending legislation and no provision is final as of yet. The RAISE Act was initially introduced in February 2017 and bill is expected to face an uphill battle in the Senate, where it is anticipated that it will receive pushback from senators on both sides of the aisle.

We urge any company representative or foreign national seeking guidance on this issue to contact an MVA team member.