



US at risk of losing 100K employment-based green cards due to pandemic backlog

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There's another threat to the worker shortage facing the nation.

The U.S. is at risk of losing 100,000 employment-based green cards due to a pandemic backlog. It's impacting more than 1 million immigrants who have already been waiting months or even years for a green card.

“We don't want these people to leave our country and go to other countries and contribute to their economies,” said David Bier, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute.

Immigration policy experts that we spoke with say in most cases these are people who have decades of experience in their field and would be hard to replace if they left.

It's impacting tech employees from India the most.

“I think what's important for people to understand is, these are visa numbers that are authorized by Congress and the only reason that they're not being issued is because of administrative processing delays,” said Sharvari Dalal-Dheini, Director of Government Relations at the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Last October, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) started with 120,000 more green cards than usual, which was an effort to clear up the pandemic backlog. But things like staffing issues within the sector are what's putting such a high number at risk of expiring on Sept. 30.

If too many people waiting on a green card leave the country, it could be costly for companies that already have a high number of job openings.

“Because if they're not filled, they aren't producing to their highest capacity. And that's harming everyone. That's harming consumers who are going to buy the products that these businesses are producing,” said Bier.

“I think there are a number of things that the government can do to make their processing much more efficient. They should take away administrative barriers that sort of delay processing unnecessarily. They need to think creatively and come into this world of the pandemic of doing things remotely and virtually,” said Dalal-Dheini.

USCIS has not yet said if it plans to change its processing protocol to try and beat the Sept. 30 deadline.