

US House panel passes Eagle Act draft seeking removal of country cap for employment-based green cards

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MUMBAI: The draft of the Eagle (Equal access to green cards for legal employment) Act that seeks to remove the 7% per country cap on employment-based green cards in a phased manner has been passed by the US House Judiciary Committee. The Bill of the Eagle Act also raises the 7% per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15%.

However, neither does it provide for any increase in the total number of employment-based green cards — the annual limit is 140,000 — nor does it seek to recapture the unutilised numbers.

This Bill will now proceed for voting in the House of Representatives. The lead sponsors of this Bill in the House are Zoe Lofgren, a member of the Democratic party and Republican John Curtis. It will also have to be taken up for discussions and voting at the Senate level. Several immigration experts are of the view that its passage in the Senate may be very challenging.

Immigration Voice, a not-for-profit that works towards alleviating the problems faced by legal high-skilled future Americans, has been actively lobbying for the passing of this Bill. It has tweeted, “This is a great day!! We request the House leadership to bring up the Eagle Act for the floor vote expeditiously to send the bill to the Senate.”

The Indian diaspora has been badly impacted by the per-country cap of 7% for green cards. According to a recent study done by David J Bier, Immigration Policy Analyst at Cato Institute, a Washington-headquartered think-tank, the employment-based green- card backlog for skilled Indians had reached 7.19 lakh in September 2021, with an expected wait time of 90 years.

More than two lakh Indians, who are mired in this backlog, are likely to die before they can conceivably receive a green card (in want of a change in the law). Only about half of the pending Indian immigrants will likely receive green cards under the current law. Another roughly 90,000 children of immigrants — mainly Indians — will ‘age out’ of green card eligibility during their waits, adds the study.