

# INDIAWEST

Best Indian Newspaper in Print & Online

## **Indian Skilled Workers Received Only 2,500 Green Cards in 2019, 25 Died Waiting in Long Queue**

Sunita Sohrabji

March 25, 2020

Only 2,500 green cards were issued in 2019 to highly skilled foreign workers, according to data released by the Cato Institute.

Immigration Voice, an advocacy group for Indian highly skilled workers, estimates that more than half a million people are stuck in the queue for an employment-based green card. Once a green card application is approved, it can take 50 years or longer to actually get a green card, noted the organization.

The U.S. currently limits employment-based green cards to 140,000 per year. Each country of origin is limited to no more than 7 percent of the employment-based visas allocated that year.

For 2019, Indian foreign workers were eligible to receive 9,800 green cards, but only 2,508 were allocated, noted the Cato Institute, in findings released Feb. 25. The organization said that the number of green cards issued to Indian skilled workers was severely low in comparison to the number of people who had applied.

Immigration Voice is backing HR 1044, the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act, which would eliminate the per country cap of 7 percent, and clear the backlog of skilled foreign workers waiting for green cards. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Zoe Lofgren, a Democrat who represents portions of Northern California's Silicon Valley. The bill passed the House on July 10, 2019, on a 365-65 vote with support from both sides of the aisle.

The Senate is now considering its own version of the Act: S386. Immigration Voice is putting pressure on Minority Whip Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, who has been trying to add language to the bill that would increase the number of employment-based green cards available each year.

The issue disproportionately affects Indian workers: skilled workers from China only face a 6-year wait time, while workers from other countries face almost no backlog.

In a blog post, Immigration Voice listed the names of 25 people who had died last year while waiting in the employment-based green card queue. The Cato Institute predicted that 50,000 people would die in the queue, if they had to wait 50 or more years.

Overall in 2019, 9,607 green cards were issued to immediate family relatives, while 13,272 were issued in general family preference. Indian nationals received 24,965 green cards last year.