



House panel approves bill to remove green card country caps

By Arun Kumar

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As the US House Judiciary Committee approved a bill to remove the discriminatory per country limits on Green Cards and sent it House for the floor vote, activists hailed it as a ‘great day!’

The EAGLE (Equal access to green cards for legal employment) Act seeks to remove the 7% per country cap on employment-based green cards in a phased manner. It also raises the 7% per-country limit on family-sponsored visas to 15%.

However, it does not 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 un-utilized numbers.

“This is a great day!!” tweeted Immigration Voice, a not-for-profit actively working for legal high-skilled immigrants, requesting “the House leadership to bring up EAGLE Act for the floor vote expeditiously to send the bill to the Senate.”

“The passion shown here with the action item has been amazing. As the hearing starts, now is the time to end this action item, and watch the results of all of our collective work. After which we move on to the next action item with even more energy! Kudos,” it wrote.

While the bipartisan bill co-sponsored by Democrat Zoe Lofgren and Republican John Curtis may sail through the Democratic controlled House, its passage through the evenly divided Senate may not be easy.

EAGLE Act holds a ray of hope for Indians stuck in decades-long backlog for employment-based green cards. Their number reached 719,000 in September 2021, with an expected wait time of 90 years according to a recent study by Cato Institute, a Washington think-tank.

Under today’s 7% cap, countries like India and China, which account for over 40% of the world’s population and an even higher percentage of the high-skilled global workforce, receive the same amount of visas as Denmark, a country that accounts for 0.001% of the world’s population.

As a result, immigrants from certain countries, who are as qualified as any other high-skilled worker entering the US, are forced to wait 20 to 30 times longer for lawful permanent residency status (in the form of Green Card), Immigration Voice noted.

“This creates an economically unhealthy reliance on temporary visas and costs the US economy in the form of attrition of experienced high-skilled workers who are compelled to depart the US and migrate to other countries that are more welcoming towards high-skilled workers,” it said.

Per country caps are not only bad for Immigrant workers and American workers, but they are also bad for the American economy, Immigration Voice said citing a study by the CATO institute.

Titled “Higher-paid Immigrants Forced to Wait Longer Due to Per-country Limits,” the study estimates that removing national origin discrimination on employment-based Green Cards will result in raising the average wage of an employment-based immigrant by \$11,592 – which is a 12% increase.

Additionally, the same CATO study finds that removing the per country caps would result in America welcoming better-educated immigrants.

The EAGLE Act would correct these problems by creating a system where all equally qualified high-skilled workers, no matter their country of birth, will receive employment-based Green Cards in the order in which they apply and based solely on the skills they bring to America, Immigration Voice said.

Also, while the backlog is being cleared, the system will ensure that skilled immigrants from non-backlogged countries