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Lengthy Wait for Indian Immigrants Seeking Green Cards, Could be 150 Years: Cato Report

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There is a growing wait time for immigrants seeking green cards after their H-1B visa runs out, according to reports.

To continue working after an H-1B runs out, foreign citizens may obtain an EB-1 visa for people with “extraordinary” ability, an EB-2 for people with advanced degrees or an EB-3 for bachelor’s degree holders, a Silicon Beat report said.

As of mid-April, more than 300,000 Indian immigrants were on EB visas and waiting for green cards, according to a new report from the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, the report said. Add in spouses and minor children, and the total number on hold exceeds 600,000 people, it added.

The approximately 217,000 Indians on the EB-2 visa for holders of advanced degrees have little reason to hope they’ll ever get a green card, according to Cato’s research, based on federal government data, it said.

“At current rates of visa issuances, they will have to wait 151 years for a green card,” Cato reported June 8, the Silicon Valley publication noted. “Obviously, unless the law changes, they will have died or left by that point.”

Because each visa category is allotted a minimum of 40,040 green cards, and the share is not adjusted according to demand, and because immigrants from any one country can’t receive more than 7 percent of green cards issued each year, the wait times vary, according to Cato, the publication added.

“The shortest wait is for the highest-skilled category for EB-1 immigrants with ‘extraordinary ability,’ the think tank reported.

“The extraordinary immigrants from India will have to wait ‘only’ six years. EB-3 immigrants — those with bachelor’s degrees — will have to wait about 17 years.”

The 1965 legislation that allowed immigrants from any nation to receive up to 7 percent of the green cards issued each year means that Estonians, for example, have a much easier time getting permanent residence than Indians, according to Cato, the report said.

In related news, Indians account for more than three-fourths of those highly-skilled professionals waiting in queue to obtain legal permanent residence status in the U.S., or Green Cards, according to latest official figures.

As of May 2018, there were 395,025 foreign nationals waiting for a Green Card under the employment-based preference category. Of these, 306,601 were Indians, according to the latest figures released by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

This does not include counts of dependent beneficiaries associated with the approved immigrant petitions, it said.