

The crusade against legal immigration

Editoriale

The Trump administration's announcement [last Friday](#) that foreigners seeking green cards should travel to their home country to apply is the latest salvo in a drive to reduce the number of *legal* immigrants. Adding layers of bureaucratic chaos will have the insidious effect of discouraging people from following the law.

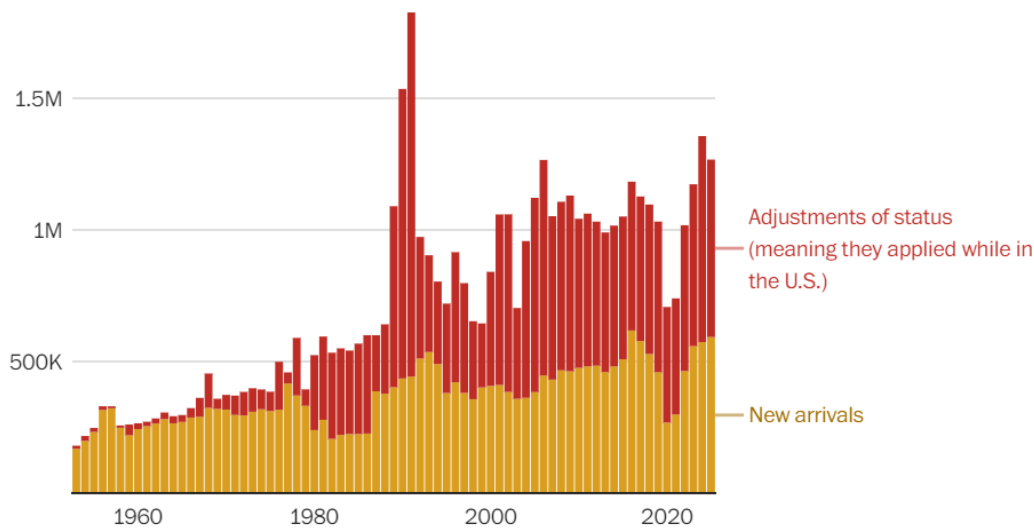
[More than half](#) of all immigrants who receive permanent resident status in the United States do so within its borders through a process known as adjustment of status. That system has been in place for decades, accounting for more than half a million green cards last year.

These individuals have already been vetted and live in the U.S. legally on student, tourist or other temporary visas. Many of them are married to U.S. citizens or have children who were born here. Forcing them to return to their home countries to request a green card, and wait for the government to wade through its backlog of applications, creates costly disruptions to their lives.

Complicating matters: President Donald Trump has [banned or severely restricted travel](#) from 75 countries.

The administration [has already slashed monthly green card approvals](#) in half. It has suspended all immigration requests, including for permanent residence, from a few Latin American countries, including Cuba. It's also halted refugee admissions, except for [17,500 slots](#) largely reserved for White South Africans.

Number of legal immigrants receiving permanent residency in the U.S., by type



Source: [Cato Institute](#)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services “has already started asking some applicants why they did not leave the United States and return home to apply for a green card,” The Post [reported on Wednesday](#). “Some are also being asked why they didn’t return home when their visas expired, or if there is anything preventing them from applying through a consulate.”

The Trump administration says the adjustment of status process [should only be used](#) in “extraordinary” circumstances. “Our system is designed for them to leave when their visit is over,” said Zach Kahler, a spokesperson for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Kahler indicated that some applicants would be exempt from the requirement, including those who “provide an economic benefit or otherwise are in the national interest.” That should include, for instance, [high-skilled immigrants on H-1B visas](#). But the White House has remained vague about standards.

The administration previously imposed [a \\$100,000 fee](#) on all new H-1B visas and [heightened its vetting procedures](#), causing delays in processing. On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin [threatened to halt international flights](#) to cities that refuse to cooperate with his department’s immigration policies. The administration also upended the naturalization process by [adding requirements](#) for

immigrants to show their “good moral character” and imposing a [harder citizenship test](#).

The president and other senior officials often claim they support immigration when it is done legally, but these measures suggest that rhetoric is hollow. With the country in desperate need of workers, it’s bad policy. In a nation where [a clear majority](#) welcomes law-abiding immigrants, it’s also bad politics.