

## **US IMMIGRATION POLICY TIMELINE**

(from Aviva Chomsky's "They Take Our Jobs!" and 20 Other Myths About Immigration)

- 1790 First naturalization law passed, restricting naturalization to "free white persons."
- 1798 Alien and Sedition Acts provide for deportation of "dangerous" aliens.
- 1803 Louisiana Purchase doubles the size of U.S territory, incorporating new populations.
- 1808 Importation of slaves prohibited.
- 1819 First federal immigration legislation requires reporting of all entries.
- 1830 Indian Removal Act leads to deportation of 100,000 Native Americans to west of the Mississippi.
- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo expands the borders of the United States to the Pacific. Mexican residents given the option of declaring U.S or Mexican citizenship.
- 1855 Immigrant women granted citizenship automatically upon marriage to a citizen, or upon an immigrant husband's naturalization.
- 1857 Dred Scott decision mandates that African Americans cannot be citizens.
- 1864 Contract Labor Law permits recruitment of foreign workers.
- 1868 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment grants citizenship to African Americans born into the U.S.
- 1870 Naturalization Act allows "white persons and persons of African descent" to naturalize.
- 1875 Convicts and prostitutes prohibited from entering country.
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prohibits entry of Chinese for 10 years.
- 1885 Contract Labor Law prohibits entry by sea of workers recruited abroad (in other words...continues to allow recruitment of Mexican contract workers).
- 1891 Bureau of Immigration established under the Treasury Department to oversee and enforce federal immigration law.  
Steamship companies required to return immigrants who fall into excluded categories to their place of origin.
- 1892 Ellis Island opened to screen incoming immigrants arriving from Europe.

- 1898 United States takes Puerto Rico, Guam, Philippines, and Hawaii as “territories.” Residents are not granted citizenship, but as “nationals” they can enter the continental U.S.
- 1902 Chinese Exclusion Act renewed indefinitely.
- 1903 Anarchists, epileptics, polygamists, and beggars ruled inadmissible.  
Bureau of Immigration transferred to the Department of Commerce and Labor.
- 1906 Knowledge of English required for naturalization.  
Bureau of Immigration becomes Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (the two are split in 1913 and reunited in 1933 under the Department of Labor as the Immigration and Naturalization Service).  
First implementation of inspections at the Mexican border, primarily aimed at excluding Chinese entering through Mexico.
- 1907 Gentleman’s Agreement with Japan restricts Japanese immigration.  
Head tax is raised.  
People with physical or mental defects, tuberculosis, and children unaccompanied by a parent are excluded.  
Women lose citizenship upon marrying a noncitizen.
- 1917 Asiatic barred zone prohibits all immigration from Asia.  
Literacy requirement established for immigrants from Europe.  
Temporary guest-worker program exempts Mexicans from literacy requirement and head tax.  
Puerto Ricans granted citizenship.
- 1918 Passport Act requires official documentation for entry into the United States.  
Border Crossing Cards issued for Canadians and Mexicans.
- 1921 Quota Act limits European immigrants to 3 percent of each European nationality present in the U.S. in 1910. Visa issued in home country now required for entry.  
Non-Europeans are not included in the act: Asians are still barred, immigrants from the Western Hemisphere are allowed unlimited entry, and Africans are ignored.
- 1922 Mexican guest-worker program abolished.  
Woman’s citizenship separated from that of their husbands (except if a woman marries an alien who is racially ineligible for citizenship, in which case she loses her citizenship).
- 1924 Quota Act revised to 2 % of each nationality based on numbers in U.S in 1890. Still applies only to Europeans.  
Border Patrol created.

Native Americans born in the United States granted citizenship (but still not allowed to naturalize).

- 1929 1924 Quota Act made permanent.
- 1930 Deportation of millions of Mexicans begins.
- 1934 Philippine Independence Act turns the Philippines into a commonwealth; Filipinos are no longer “nationals”; Philippines granted an immigration quota of 50.
- 1940 Alien Registration Act/ Smith Act. Provides penalties, including deportation of noncitizens, for subversive activities. Requires fingerprinting and registration of all aliens.  
“Descendants of races indigenous to the Western Hemisphere” allowed to naturalize.
- 1941 Internment of “enemy aliens” (primarily Japanese) begins. 120,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated by 1945.
- 1942 Bracero Program established for contracting of temporary agricultural workers from Mexico.
- 1943 Chinese Exclusion Law repealed, and Chinese allowed to become naturalized citizens. China granted a quota of 105.  
British West Indies program established for importation of temporary agricultural workers from the BWI to 11 eastern states (especially Florida).
- 1945 War Brides Act allows immigration of foreign women married to members of the US armed forces.
- 1946 Filipinos and (Asian) Indians allowed to naturalize (other Asians, including Koreans, Japanese, and Southeast Asians, still ineligible for citizenship). Philippines granted independence, and a quota of 100. India also given quota of 100.
- 1947 Operation Bootstrap in Puerto Rico sets the stage for the “great migration” of the 1950s.  
Newly formed Pakistan granted quota of 100.
- 1948 Displaced Persons Act permits 205,000 European war refugees to enter over two years.
- 1949 CIA created and granted a quota of 100 to bring in aliens useful to “the national mission” without regard to admissibility.

- 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran-Walter Act) technically eliminates race as a bar to immigration or citizenship. Asiatic barred zone abolished. Japan's quota set at 185 annually. China's remains at 105; other Asian countries given 100. Colonial subjects not eligible for quotas (e.g., black West Indians cannot enter under Britain's quota even though they are British citizens).  
H-2 temporary visa establishes a large but generally ignored guest-worker program.  
Attorney general is authorized to "parole" immigrants over quota for reasons of "public interest." This provision will be used for Hungarians fleeing the Soviet invasion in 1956, for 15,000 Chinese fleeing China's 1949 Communist revolution, and for 145,000 Cubans fleeing the 1959 revolution there, as well as 400,000 Southeast Asian refugees between 1975 and 1980.  
Prohibition on "subversives" (and specifically Communists, anarchists, and homosexuals) means many foreign intellectuals cannot travel to United States.
- 1953 Refugee Relief Act expands Displaced Persons Act of 1948 to allow 200,000 more entrants above quotas. "Refugee" defined as a person fleeing a Communist country or the Middle East. Asians allowed as refugees for the first time.
- 1954 "Operation Wetback" deports one million undocumented Mexicans.  
Numbers entering under the Bracero program increase from 200,000 a year prior to Operation Wetback to 450,000 a year by the end of the 1950s.
- 1957 Refugee admissions no longer subject to quota system.
- 1959 Cuban Revolution; U.S. attorney general grants Cuban immigrants widespread parole to enter the United States as refugees.  
Hawaii becomes a state, significantly increasing "Asian" population of U.S.
- 1962 Cuban Refugee Program provides financial assistance to Cuban entrants.
- 1964 Bracero program abolished.
- 1965 Hart-Celler Act establishes a uniform quota of 20,000 per country for countries outside the Western Hemisphere and a ceiling of 120,000 for immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Family reunification, job skills, and refugee status are privileged. Immediate family members exempted from quota. Provisions made for 17,400 refugees per year.  
H-2 temporary worker program continued.  
Voting Rights act strengthens citizenship for African Americans.
- 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act offers Cubans automatic refugee and legal permanent residence status, chargeable to the Western Hemisphere quota.
- 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act provides resettlement assistance for refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam (Laos added in 1976).

- 1976 Uniform quota of 20,000 applied to Western Hemisphere countries (Cuban refugees not charged to quota system).
- 1977 Indochinese refugees granted permanent resident status.
- 1978 Eastern and Western Hemisphere quotas combined to allow 290,000 global limit.
- 1980 Refugee Act brings U.S. law into compliance with UN Refugee Convention (which the U.S. signed in 1968). Allows entrance to 50,000 refugees a year outside of the quota system. Defines refugees as persons who have a “well-founded fear of persecution” based on “race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Establishes federal programs for resettlement. Lowers global (non-refugee) quota to 270,000 a year.  
Registered nurses granted special access to permanent legal status.
- 1981 Immigrants who are not legal permanent residents are denied access to most federal aid programs.
- 1982 Operation Jobs- INS raids workplaces, arrests 5,000.
- 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allows undocumented immigrants who can prove continued presence in the country since 1982 and fulfill other requirements to apply for legalization- 1.7 million apply. SAW (Special Agricultural Workers) provision allows legalization for those engaged in temporary agricultural work in 1985 and 1986. Nearly 1 million approved.  
IRCA imposes employer sanctions requiring employers to verify immigration status of workers hired.  
H-2 temporary worker program split between H-2A (agriculture) and H-2B (nonagricultural) workers.
- 1990 Global cap on immigration increased to 675,000 a year, including 480,000 family-sponsored, 140,000 employment-based, and 55,000 “diversity immigrants” from low-sending countries, especially Ireland.  
*American Baptist Church v. Thornburgh* lawsuit settlement allows Guatemalans and Salvadorans to remain in the country and work while asylum cases are reevaluated.
- 1994 Operation Gatekeeper tries to close San Diego crossing points with fencing, stadium lights, and greatly increased border patrol presence. Migrant crossings start to shift eastward toward the Arizona desert.  
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) increases economic integration between United States and Mexico.
- 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act bars legal

permanent residents from most federal aid programs (food stamps, Medicaid) unless they have lived in the U.S. for 5 years, and allows states to create further restrictions.

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) greatly increases funding for Border Patrol and detention of aliens; increases penalties for unlawful entry and facilitates deportation; requires proof of citizenship for federal public benefits; requires educational institutions to provide INS with information on foreign students. Cubans exempted from many of the provisions.

- 1997        Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) allows Nicaraguans and Cubans easier access to legal permanent resident status.
- 2001        Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act prohibits entry of people associated with organizations or governments identified as supporting terrorism.
- 2002        Homeland Security Act replaces the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) with the newly created U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Department of Homeland Security.