



## America's Broken Family Immigration System and its Impact on Asian Americans

*Asian Americans want immigration reform that will eliminate the backlog and provide a meaningful system for Asian Americans to reunite with family members abroad, including married adult children and siblings.*

**Family unity is a valued tradition and the foundation of America's immigration system, adding to the nation's economy and strengthening families and communities.**

- It remains an American tradition and policy that U.S. citizens and permanent residents unite with their closest family members in the U.S. Families are the core unit of our nation, and immigrant families come to the U.S. in search of opportunity. Together, families work hard, pay taxes, buy homes, and start job-creating businesses.
- Family sponsorship counts for more than 88 percent of legal immigration to the United States.

**However, the family-based system has not been reformed in decades, resulting in an outdated and inefficient process, which forces families to live apart for years, sometimes decades.**

### **How the system works:**

- The family-based system grants visas that are grouped into two categories: immediate relatives and family preference.<sup>i</sup>
- The annual ceiling for all family-based immigration is 480,000 applicants a year. Family preference visas are capped at 226,000 applicants a year.
- Applicants for family-based visas must have a sponsor in the U.S. to financially support the applicant.

### **How it keeps families apart:**

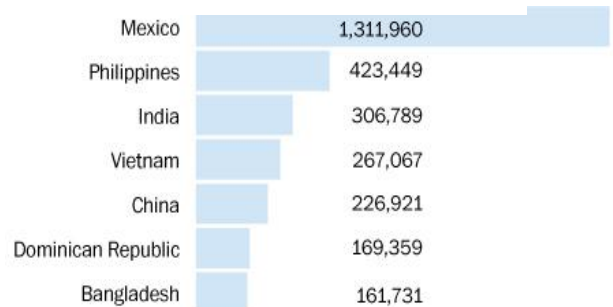
- The system has not been updated in over 20 years, imposes an unacceptably narrow concept of family on ethnic groups, and does not match the current needs of families.
- A combination of limits on overall visas and bureaucratic delay force a current worldwide family backlog of 4.3 million aspiring immigrants, which includes millions of Asian-Americans living apart from their families.

**Asian Americans rely on the family-based system to keep their families together, and thus, are disproportionately impacted by this broken system.**

- The majority of Asians immigrating to the U.S. do so through the family immigration system; in 2012, 86 percent of visas issued for Asian countries were family-based.
- Asian American citizens sponsor nearly one third of all family-based visas each year. In 2012, 48% of Asian immigrants granted legal permanent status did so through family visas.
- Asian Americans are more likely than other groups to have family members caught up in visa backlogs.
- Family members who are caught in the backlogs wait as long as 10 to 23 years to be reunited.

### **The Family Visa Waiting List**

**Of the 4.3 million applicants, nearly half are from Asian countries.**



Source: State Department. *The Washington Post*.  
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<sup>i</sup> The immediate relatives category includes spouses, parents, and unmarried children under 21 of U.S. citizens. The family preference category includes adult children and siblings of U.S. citizens, and spouses and unmarried children of green card holders.