

FORBES > BUSINESS > POLICY

Registry Date Reform In U.S. Congress Could Impact Over 8 Million Immigrants

Andy J. Semotiuk Contributor 

I write about investor immigration and about Immigration issues.

Follow

Sep 30, 2022, 11:18am EDT

Listen to article 5 minutes



Senators Dick Durbin and Alex Padilla have proposed changing the registry date to help millions of ... [+] GETTY IMAGES

Not every initiative to change U.S. immigration law is as significant and capable of helping millions of immigrants as the one that was recently introduced in the Senate by Senators Dick Durbin and Alex Padilla. The Senators jointly proposed a new bill entitled the

Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929 that would update the existing registry date to enable an estimated eight million immigrants to apply for permanent residence if they have lived in the U.S. continuously for at least seven years. Applicants would have to be of good moral character but could apply even if they are unlawfully in the United States at the moment.

First Registry Change Since 1986

This proposed change to the registry date would be the first since 1986. Until it is changed the current registry cutoff date for eligibility remains January 1, 1972. In other words, to be eligible to apply for permanent residence under the current registry date you have to show physical presence in the United States for more than 50 years. The new bill that seeks to update the registry criteria is cosponsored by Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ben Ray Luján and companion legislation was [introduced](#) in the House by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren back in July of this year.



Some eight million immigrants would be affected by the change
GETTY

Why Change Is Needed

The registry date was introduced for several reasons. For one, it was felt that there was a point beyond which an undocumented immigrant's contribution to this country outweighed the harm done. For another, resorting to a registry date was a recognition of

the impracticality of chasing millions of undocumented people around forever. Like in other areas of law where there are limitation periods associated with prosecutions of offenders, fairness required some means for certain long-term residents, ie

those of good moral character, to make amends. In short, it was felt that it made sense to enable such immigrants, who currently live in the shadows, who work while being paid under the table, and who live with the hope that one day, somehow, they will be able to emerge from their quiet lives of desperation, to enter into the mainstream of American society.

Proponents of the initiative [argue](#) that the long-term undocumented immigrants who may benefit from this legislation have deep roots in America. They have made lives for themselves and their families here. They have come to share the same values that other Americans hold dear. They belong to the same community organizations, their children go to the same schools, and many attend the same churches and have the same hopes and fears as other Americans.

Simple Procedure Involved

Were the new initiatives in the House and Senate passed, what is significant about them is that no medical test, no financial affidavit of support, and no U.S. petitioner are required for registry candidates to succeed. Instead, all that is required to apply is for an applicant to submit an application, together with the appropriate fee, to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Forbes Daily: Get our best stories, exclusive reporting and essential analysis of the day's news in your inbox every weekday.

[Sign Up](#)

By signing up, you accept and agree to our [Terms of Service](#) (including the class action waiver and arbitration provisions), and [Privacy Statement](#).

MORE FROM [FORBES ADVISOR](#)

Best Travel Insurance Companies

By **Amy Danise** Editor

Best Covid-19 Travel Insurance Plans

By **Amy Danise** Editor

Benefits Of The Change

Proponents of the legislation contend that it would provide a much-needed pathway to a green card for up to eight million people, including Dreamers, forcibly displaced people, Temporary Protected Status holders, children of long-term visa holders who face deportation, essential workers, and highly skilled members of our workforce such as H-1B visa holders who have been waiting years for a green card to become available. According to [FWD.us estimates](#), if the undocumented individuals covered in this bill became citizens, they would contribute approximately \$83 billion to the U.S. economy annually and about \$27 billion in taxes.

Will The Bills Be Passed?

However, this initiative faces a difficult path to success. For one thing, Republicans do not support these measures. They are more focused on the immigration problems at the southern border and on enforcement and deportations.

Since at the moment both the House and the Senate are controlled by the Democrats, it is still theoretically possible for them to pass the bills. But realistically speaking, it will be hard to build the momentum to do it. Every



Not everyone supports the change in the registry date. GETTY

Democrat in the Senate, without exception, will have to support this bill and in the House, almost all the Democrats will be needed. Time is of the essence. The recent devastation caused by hurricane Ian, to name only one item, promises to tie up the Congressional agenda. There is not much time left to adopt the measures.

It's Now Or Never

Failing that, the November elections just around the corner are projected to change everything. While the most recent [Politico poll](#) indicates the Senate is still a toss-up, it is likely that the Republicans will take over the majority of seats in the House. If that is the case, these bills will be dead in the water and immigration reform will have to go back to the drawing boards.

It remains to be seen whether the most significant step in immigration reform in decades will be taken or whether significant immigration reform will again be relegated back to a forlorn hope. *Follow me on [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Check out my [website](#) or some of my other work [here](#).*



Andy J. Semotiuk

Follow

I am a U.S. and Canadian Immigration attorney and have helped over 10,000 clients with various legal problems. I am a member of the New York and California bars... **Read More**

[Editorial Standards](#)

[Reprints & Permissions](#)

ADVERTISEMENT