

# National Foundation for American Policy

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## **Research: The Trump Administration Has Increased Denial Rates for High-Skilled Immigrants and Temporary Visas**

**Arlington, Va.** – The Trump administration increased denial rates for highly skilled employment-based immigrants in FY 2025, according to [an analysis](#) by the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), a nonpartisan research organization based in Arlington, VA. The denial rate increases reflect policy choices to restrict or prevent high-skilled foreign nationals from working in the United States. Other administration policies have included imposing a \$100,000 fee on the entry of new H-1B visa holders and a proposed rule that would significantly raise the required prevailing wage for H-1B professionals and employment-based immigrants.

“The latest data show that Trump administration officials intend to make it difficult for even the most highly skilled individuals from around the world to work in the United States,” said NFAP Executive Director Stuart Anderson.

The study “Analysis of USCIS Denial Rates for High-Skilled Immigrants and Temporary Visas,” can be found at <https://nfap.com/>.

An NFAP analysis of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data finds:

- The denial rate for an alien with extraordinary ability (in the employment-based first preference green card category) nearly doubled from 25.6% to 46.6% between the fourth quarter of FY 2024 and the fourth quarter of FY 2025.
- The denial rate for national interest waivers (in the employment-based second preference green card category) rose from 38.8% to 64.3% between the fourth quarter of FY 2024 and the fourth quarter of FY 2025.
- The denial rate for O temporary visas (for individuals with extraordinary ability) rose from 5.0% in the fourth quarter of FY 2024 to 7.3% in the fourth quarter of FY 2025, representing a 46% increase.
- The denial rate for L-1A petitions for intracompany transferees of executives or managers rose from 8.0% in the fourth quarter of FY 2024 to 9.6% in the fourth quarter of FY 2025.
- The denial rate for L-1B petitions for intracompany transferees with specialized knowledge rose from 8.1% in the fourth quarter of FY 2024 to 9.2% in the fourth quarter of FY 2025.
- Denial rates for H-1B petitions have not spiked during Donald Trump's second term. One reason may be that a legal settlement in 2020 tied the hands of USCIS officials after a judge found high denial rates for H-1B petitions in Trump's first term were caused by unlawful actions that changed the criteria for approvals without using the formal rulemaking process.

- USCIS had a “net backlog” of 6.3 million applications at the end of FY 2025, an increase of 65%, or 2.5 million, between the fourth quarter of FY 2024 and the fourth quarter of FY 2025. Most of that increase in pending cases resulted from the Trump administration choosing to end Temporary Protected Status for nearly all countries and parole for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans. Between the fourth quarter of FY 2024 and the fourth quarter of FY 2025, the net backlog for I-129 petitions for a nonimmigrant (temporary) worker increased by more than 54,000 and by 58,400 for I-140 immigration petitions for alien workers. The backlog for I-485 forms to register permanent residence or adjust status also increased.
- The frontlog of unopened applications at USCIS increased from zero at the end of FY 2024 to 247,974 by the end of FY 2025.

Two memos from USCIS Director Joseph Edlow suspended processing inside the country for people from 39 countries. Lawsuits have challenged the actions, since the proclamations on which the processing suspension is based restrict entry, not adjudications within the United States.

The Trump administration has reduced the projected level of legal immigration to the United States by more than 600,000 immigrants during Donald Trump’s second term, according to a National Foundation for American Policy [estimate](#). The 600,000 reduction in legal immigration includes the administration lowering refugee admissions by more than 100,000 a year, or by at least 400,000 by 2028, and a projected decline of more than 200,000 immigrants due to the Trump administration’s ban on the Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens from multiple countries via a December 16, 2025, [proclamation](#).

**About the National Foundation for American Policy**

Established in 2003, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia focusing on trade, immigration and related issues. The Advisory Board members include Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Ohio University economist Richard Vedder, Cornell Law School professor Stephen W. Yale-Loehr and former INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. Over the past 24 months, NFAP’s research has been written about in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other major media outlets. The organization’s reports can be found at [www.nfap.com](http://www.nfap.com). X.com: [@NFAPResearch](#) Bluesky: [@NFAPResearch.bsky.social](#)

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