

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4817

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the annual numerical limitation on visas for certain immigrants, to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant work authorization to certain immigrants with a pending application for nonimmigrant status under such Act, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2025

Mr. PANETTA (for himself and Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## A BILL

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the annual numerical limitation on visas for certain immigrants, to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant work authorization to certain immigrants with a pending application for nonimmigrant status under such Act, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Immigrant Witness  
5       and Victim Protection Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. PURPOSE; FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

2 (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to remove  
3 barriers for alien survivors of domestic violence, sexual as-  
4 sault, human trafficking, and other crimes who may be  
5 eligible for protections under the Violence Against Women  
6 Act of 1994 (VAWA), the Trafficking Victims Protection  
7 Act of 2000 (TVPA), and their subsequent reauthoriza-  
8 tions.

9 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

10 (1) Threats of deportation are one of the most  
11 potent tools abusers and perpetrators of crime use  
12 to maintain control over and silence alien victims  
13 and to avoid criminal prosecution. Abusers and per-  
14 petrators leverage the immigration system in the  
15 abuse and exploitation of aliens they victimize.

16 (2) A bipartisan majority in Congress created  
17 critical immigration protections in VAWA, TVPA  
18 and their subsequent reauthorizations in recognition  
19 that alien survivors of domestic violence, sexual as-  
20 sault, human trafficking, and other eligible crimes  
21 often fear that reaching out for help may lead to  
22 their deportation.

23 (3) Detention and removal of those with victim-  
24 based cases undermines the intent of VAWA, TVPA,  
25 and their subsequent reauthorizations and re-  
26 traumatizes victims and their children. Deporting

1 survivors while they await decisions on their cases  
2 discourages victims from accessing justice, under-  
3 mines the usefulness of these forms of relief as tools  
4 for law enforcement that seek to keep all commu-  
5 nities safe, separates them from their children and  
6 support networks, and eliminates the ability of local  
7 law enforcement to continue protecting and working  
8 with such crime survivors.

9 (4) Lack of timely access to employment au-  
10 thorization makes victims more vulnerable and may  
11 lead to their need to endure or return to abusive re-  
12 lationships or exploitative conditions. Crime and  
13 abuse survivors should have access to work author-  
14 ization to escape abusive situations, and gain self-  
15 sufficiency following victimization so they can sup-  
16 port themselves and their families.

17 (c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
18 gress that the Secretary of Homeland Security should not  
19 deport crime victims or neglected, abused, or abandoned  
20 youth before their applications for humanitarian relief are  
21 fully adjudicated, as it undermines critical bipartisan pro-  
22 tections created in VAWA, TVPA, and their subsequent  
23 reauthorizations.

1 **SEC. 3. ELIMINATION OF ANNUAL NUMERICAL LIMITATION**  
 2 **ON U VISAS.**

3 Section 214(p) of the Immigration and Nationality  
 4 Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(p)) is amended by striking paragraph  
 5 (2).

6 **SEC. 4. ELIMINATION OF ANNUAL NUMERICAL LIMITATION**  
 7 **ON SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE VISAS.**

8 (a) **ALIENS NOT SUBJECT TO DIRECT NUMERICAL**  
 9 **LIMITATIONS.**—Section 201(b)(1)(A) of the Immigration  
 10 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(1)(A)) is amended  
 11 by striking “subparagraph (A) or (B)” and inserting  
 12 “subparagraphs (A), (B), or (J)”.

13 (b) **PER COUNTRY LEVELS.**—Section 202(a)(2) of  
 14 the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.  
 15 1152(a)(2)) is amended by striking “(5),” and inserting  
 16 “(5), and except for special immigrants described in sub-  
 17 paragraph (J) of section 1101(a)(27) of this title,”.

18 (c) **CERTAIN SPECIAL IMMIGRANTS.**—Section  
 19 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8  
 20 U.S.C. 1153(b)(4)) is amended by striking “subparagraph  
 21 (A) or (B)” and inserting “subparagraphs (A), (B), or  
 22 (J)”.

23 **SEC. 5. WORK AUTHORIZATION WHILE APPLICATIONS AND**  
 24 **PETITIONS ARE PENDING.**

25 (a) **U VISAS.**—Section 214(p) of the Immigration  
 26 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(p)) is amended—

1           (1) in paragraph (6), by striking the last sen-  
2       tence; and

3           (2) by adding at the end the following:

4           “(8) WORK AUTHORIZATION.—Notwithstanding  
5       any provision of this Act granting eligibility for em-  
6       ployment in the United States, the Secretary of  
7       Homeland Security shall grant employment author-  
8       ization to an alien who has filed an application for  
9       nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(U)  
10      on the date that is the earlier of—

11           “(A) the date on which the alien’s applica-  
12      tion for such status is approved; or

13           “(B) a date determined by the Secretary  
14      that is not later than 180 days after the date  
15      on which the alien filed the application.”.

16      (b) T VISAS.—Section 214(o) of the Immigration and  
17      Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1184(o)) is amended by adding  
18      at the end the following:

19           “(8) Notwithstanding any provision of this Act grant-  
20      ing eligibility for employment in the United States, the  
21      Secretary of Homeland Security shall grant employment  
22      authorization to an alien who has filed a petition for non-  
23      immigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(T) on the date  
24      that is the earlier of—

1           “(A) the date on which the alien’s petition for  
2           such status is approved; or

3           “(B) a date determined by the Secretary that  
4           is not later than 180 days after the date on which  
5           the alien filed the petition.”.

6           (c)           VAWA           SELF-PETITIONERS.—Section  
7   204(a)(1)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8  
8   U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(K)) is amended to read:

9           “(K) Notwithstanding any provision of this Act re-  
10   stricting eligibility for employment in the United States,  
11   the Secretary of Homeland Security shall grant employ-  
12   ment authorization to such an alien in the United States  
13   on the date that is the earlier of—

14           “(i) the date on which the alien’s petition as a  
15   VAWA self-petitioner is approved; or

16           “(ii) a date determined by the Secretary that is  
17   not later than 180 days after the date on which the  
18   alien filed the petition as a VAWA self-petitioner.”.

19           (d) SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILES.—Section 245  
20   of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1255)  
21   is amended by adding at the end the following:

22           “(o) WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR CERTAIN SPECIAL  
23   IMMIGRANTS.—Notwithstanding any provision of this Act  
24   granting eligibility for employment in the United States,  
25   the Secretary of Homeland Security shall grant employ-

1 ment authorization to an alien who has filed a petition  
 2 for special immigrant status under section 101(a)(27)(J)  
 3 on the date that is the earlier of—

4 “(1) the date on which the alien’s petition for  
 5 such status is approved; or

6 “(2) a date determined by the Secretary that is  
 7 not later than 180 days after the date on which the  
 8 alien filed the petition.”.

9 (e) CANCELLATION OF REMOVAL.—Section  
 10 240A(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8  
 11 U.S.C. 1229b(b)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the  
 12 following:

13 “(E) WORK AUTHORIZATION.—Notwith-  
 14 standing any provision of this Act granting eli-  
 15 gibility for employment in the United States,  
 16 the Secretary of Homeland Security shall grant  
 17 employment authorization to an alien who has  
 18 filed an application for cancellation of removal  
 19 under this paragraph on a date that is not later  
 20 than 180 days after the date on which the alien  
 21 filed the application.”.

22 **SEC. 6. STAY OF REMOVAL.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—An alien described in subsection  
 24 (b) shall not be removed from the United States under  
 25 section 240 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8

1 U.S.C. 1229a) or any other provision of law until there  
 2 is a final denial of the alien's application for status after  
 3 the exhaustion of administrative and judicial review.

4 (b) ALIENS DESCRIBED.—An alien is described in  
 5 this subsection if the alien—

6 (1) has a pending or approved application or  
 7 petition under section 101(a)(15)(T),  
 8 101(a)(15)(U), 101(a)(27)(J), 106, 240A(b)(2), or  
 9 244(a)(3) (as in effect on March 31, 1997) of the  
 10 Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101,  
 11 1229a, 1254a); or

12 (2) is a VAWA self-petitioner, as defined in sec-  
 13 tion 101(a)(51) of the Immigration and Nationality  
 14 Act, with a pending application for relief under a  
 15 provision referred to in one of subparagraphs (A)  
 16 through (G) of such section.

17 **SEC. 7. PROHIBITION ON DETENTION OF CERTAIN VICTIMS**  
 18 **WITH PENDING OR APPROVED PETITION OR**  
 19 **APPLICATION.**

20 Section 236 of the Immigration and Nationality Act  
 21 (8 U.S.C. 1226) is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
 22 lowing:

23 “(f) PROHIBITION ON DETENTION OF CERTAIN VIC-  
 24 TIMS WITH PENDING OR APPROVED PETITIONS AND AP-  
 25 PPLICATIONS.—



1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other  
2           provision of this Act, there shall be a presumption  
3           that the alien described in paragraph (2) should be  
4           released from detention. The Secretary of Homeland  
5           Security shall have the duty of rebutting this pre-  
6           sumption, which may only be shown based on clear  
7           and convincing evidence, including credible and indi-  
8           vidualized information, that the use of alternatives  
9           to detention will not reasonably ensure the appear-  
10          ance of the alien at removal proceedings, or that the  
11          alien is a threat to another person or the commu-  
12          nity. The fact that an alien has a criminal charge  
13          pending against the alien may not be the sole factor  
14          to justify the continued detention of the alien.

15          “(2) ALIEN DESCRIBED.—An alien is described  
16          in this paragraph if the alien—

17                 “(A) has a pending or approved application  
18                 or petition under section 101(a)(15)(T),  
19                 101(a)(15)(U), 101(a)(27)(J), 106, 240A(b)(2),  
20                 or 244(a)(3) (as in effect on March 31, 1997);  
21                 or

22                 “(B) is a VAWA self-petitioner, as defined  
23                 in section 101(a)(51), with a pending applica-  
24                 tion for relief under a provision referred to in

1           one of subparagraphs (A) through (G) of such  
2           section.”.

3 **SEC. 8. PENALTIES FOR DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.**

4           (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 384 of the Illegal Immi-  
5   gration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996  
6   (8 U.S.C. 1367) is amended—

7           (1) in subsection (a)—

8                   (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “solely”;

9                   (B) in paragraph (2)—

10                       (i) by striking “information which re-  
11                       lates” and inserting “information, files, or  
12                       records which relate”; and

13                       (ii) by striking the period at the end  
14                       and inserting a semicolon; and

15                   (C) by inserting after paragraph (2) the  
16           following new paragraph:

17                   “(3) Except as provided in this paragraph, nei-  
18           ther the Department, nor any other official or em-  
19           ployee of the Department, or bureau or agency  
20           thereof, nor the Department of Justice, nor any offi-  
21           cial or employee of the Department of Justice, or  
22           bureau or agency thereof, may—

23                       “(A) use the information furnished by the  
24                       applicant pursuant to an application filed under  
25                       paragraph (15)(T), (15)(U), (27)(J), or (51) of

1 section 101(a) of the Immigration and Nation-  
2 ality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (15)(T), (15)(U),  
3 (27)(J), or (51)), or section 240A(b)(2) of such  
4 Act (8 U.S.C. 1229b(b)(2)), section 106 (8  
5 U.S.C. 1105a), for any purpose other than to  
6 make a determination on the application, or for  
7 enforcement of subsection (c) of this section;

8 “(B) make any publication of information  
9 that identifies a particular individual; or

10 “(C) permit anyone other than the sworn  
11 officers and employees of the Department or  
12 bureau or agency to examine individual applica-  
13 tions.”;

14 (2) in subsection (b)—

15 (A) in paragraph (2), by striking “legiti-  
16 mate law enforcement purpose,” and inserting  
17 “a criminal investigation or prosecution,”; and

18 (B) by striking paragraph (4) and insert-  
19 ing the following new paragraph:

20 “(4) Paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (a)  
21 shall not apply if all the individuals in the case are  
22 adults and they have all waived the restrictions of  
23 such subsections.”; and

24 (3) in subsection (d), by adding at the end the  
25 following: “The Attorney General, Secretary of

1 State, and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall  
2 provide Congress with an annual report regarding  
3 training provided to officers and employees, the  
4 number of investigations opened for violations of  
5 paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a), and  
6 the results of those investigations.”.

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