

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2603

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to end the immigrant visa backlog, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 16, 2019

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, and Ms. HIRONO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to end the immigrant visa backlog, 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 “Resolving Extended
5 Limbo for Immigrant Employees and Families Act” or the
6 “RELIEF Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. NUMERICAL LIMITATION TO ANY SINGLE FOREIGN**

2 **STATE.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 202(a)(2) of the Immigra-
4 tion and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1152(a)(2)) is
5 amended—

6 (1) in the paragraph heading, by striking “AND
7 EMPLOYMENT-BASED”;

8 (2) by striking “(3), (4), and (5),” and insert-
9 ing “(3) and (4),”;

10 (3) by striking “subsections (a) and (b) of sec-
11 tion 203” and inserting “section 203(a)”;

12 (4) by striking “7” and inserting “15”; and

13 (5) by striking “such subsections” and inserting
14 “such section”.

15 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 202 of the
16 Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1152) is
17 amended—

18 (1) in subsection (a)(3), by striking “both sub-
19 sections (a) and (b) of section 203” and inserting
20 “section 203(a)”;

21 (2) by striking subsection (a)(5); and

22 (3) by amending subsection (e) to read as fol-
23 lows:

24 “(e) SPECIAL RULES FOR COUNTRIES AT CEILING.—
25 If it is determined that the total number of immigrant
26 visas made available under section 203(a) to natives of

1 any single foreign state or dependent area will exceed the
2 numerical limitation specified in subsection (a)(2) in any
3 fiscal year, in determining the allotment of immigrant visa
4 numbers to natives under section 203(a), visa numbers
5 with respect to natives of that state or area shall be allo-
6 cated (to the extent practicable and otherwise consistent
7 with this section and section 203) in a manner so that,
8 except as provided in subsection (a)(4), the proportion of
9 the visa numbers made available under each of paragraphs
10 (1) through (4) of section 203(a) is equal to the ratio of
11 the total number of visas made available under the respec-
12 tive paragraph to the total number of visas made available
13 under section 203(a).”.

14 (c) COUNTRY-SPECIFIC OFFSET.—Section 2 of the
15 Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992 (8 U.S.C. 1255
16 note) is amended—

17 (1) in subsection (a), by striking “subsection
18 (e))” and inserting “subsection (d))”; and
19 (2) by striking subsection (d) and redesignating
20 subsection (e) as subsection (d).

21 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
22 this section shall take effect as if enacted on September
23 30, 2019, and shall apply to fiscal years beginning with
24 fiscal year 2020.

1 (e) TRANSITION RULES FOR EMPLOYMENT-BASED
2 IMMIGRANTS.—

3 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the succeeding
4 paragraphs of this subsection and notwithstanding
5 title II of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
6 U.S.C. 1151 et seq.), the following rules shall apply:

7 (A) For fiscal year 2020, 15 percent of the
8 immigrant visas made available under each of
9 paragraphs (2), (3), and (5) of section 203(b)
10 of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)) shall be allotted
11 to immigrants who are natives of a foreign
12 state or dependent area that is not one of the
13 two states with the largest aggregate numbers
14 of natives who are beneficiaries of approved pe-
15 titions for immigrant status under such para-
16 graphs.

17 (B) For fiscal year 2021, 10 percent of the
18 immigrant visas made available under each of
19 such paragraphs shall be allotted to immigrants
20 who are natives of a foreign state or dependent
21 area that is not one of the two states with the
22 largest aggregate numbers of natives who are
23 beneficiaries of approved petitions for immi-
24 grant status under such paragraphs.

(C) For fiscal year 2022, 10 percent of the immigrant visas made available under each of such paragraphs shall be allotted to immigrants who are natives of a foreign state or dependent area that is not one of the two states with the largest aggregate numbers of natives who are beneficiaries of approved petitions for immigrant status under such paragraphs.

(2) PER-COUNTRY LEVELS.—

(A) RESERVED VISAS.—With respect to the visas reserved under each of subparagraphs (A) through (C) of paragraph (1), the number of such visas made available to natives of any single foreign state or dependent area in the appropriate fiscal year may not exceed 25 percent (in the case of a single foreign state) or 2 percent (in the case of a dependent area) of the total number of such visas.

(B) UNRESERVED VISAS.—With respect to the immigrant visas made available under each of paragraphs (2), (3), and (5) of section 203(b) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)) and not reserved under paragraph (1), for each of fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022, not more than 85

1 percent shall be allotted to immigrants who are
2 natives of any single foreign state.

3 (3) SPECIAL RULE TO PREVENT UNUSED
4 VISAS.—If, with respect to fiscal year 2020, 2021, or
5 2022, the operation of paragraphs (1) and (2) of
6 this subsection would prevent the total number of
7 immigrant visas made available under paragraph (2)
8 or (3) of section 203(b) of such Act (8 U.S.C.
9 1153(b)) from being issued, such visas may be
10 issued during the remainder of such fiscal year with-
11 out regard to paragraphs (1) and (2) of this sub-
12 section.

13 (4) TRANSITION RULE FOR CURRENTLY AP-
14 PROVED BENEFICIARIES.—

15 (A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding sec-
16 tion 202 of the Immigration and Nationality
17 Act, as amended by this Act, immigrant visas
18 under section 203(b) of the Immigration and
19 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)) shall be al-
20 located such that no alien described in subpara-
21 graph (B) receives a visa later than the alien
22 otherwise would have received said visa had this
23 Act not been enacted.

24 (B) ALIEN DESCRIBED.—An alien is de-
25 scribed in this subparagraph if the alien is the

1 beneficiary of a petition for an immigrant visa
2 under section 203(b) of the Immigration and
3 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153(b)) that was
4 approved prior to the date of enactment of this
5 Act.

6 (5) RULES FOR CHARGEABILITY.—Section
7 202(b) of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1152(b)) shall apply
8 in determining the foreign state to which an alien is
9 chargeable for purposes of this subsection.

10 (6) ENSURING AVAILABILITY OF IMMIGRANT
11 VISAS.—For each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024,
12 notwithstanding sections 201 and 202 of the Immig-
13 ration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151, 1152),
14 as amended by this Act, additional immigrant visas
15 under section 203 of the Immigration and Nation-
16 ality Act (8 U.S.C. 1153) shall be made available
17 and allocated—

18 (A) such that no alien who is a beneficiary
19 of a petition for an immigrant visa under such
20 section 203 receives a visa later than the alien
21 otherwise would have received such visa had
22 this Act not been enacted; and

23 (B) to permit all visas to be distributed in
24 accordance with this section.

1 **SEC. 3. ENDING IMMIGRANT VISA BACKLOG.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—In addition to any immigrant visa
3 made available under the Immigration and Nationality Act
4 (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.), as amended by this Act, subject
5 to paragraphs (1) and (2), the Secretary of State shall
6 make immigrant visas available to—

7 (1) aliens who are beneficiaries of petitions filed
8 under subsection (b) of section 203 of such Act (8
9 U.S.C. 1153) before the date of the enactment of
10 this Act; and

11 (2) aliens who are beneficiaries of petitions filed
12 under subsection (a) of such section before the date
13 of the enactment of this Act.

14 (b) ALLOCATION OF VISAS.—The visas made avail-
15 able under this section shall be allocated as follows:

16 (1) EMPLOYMENT-SPONSORED IMMIGRANT
17 VISAS.—In each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024,
18 the Secretary of State shall allocate to aliens de-
19 scribed in subsection (a)(1) a number of immigrant
20 visas equal to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the number of aliens described
21 in such subsection the visas of whom have not been
22 issued as of the date of the enactment of this Act.

23 (2) FAMILY-SPONSORED IMMIGRANT VISAS.—In
24 each of fiscal years 2020 through 2024, the Sec-
25 retary of State shall allocate to aliens described in

1 subsection (a)(2) a number of immigrant visas equal
2 to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the difference between—

3 (A) the number of aliens described in such
4 subsection the visas of whom have not been
5 issued as of the date of the enactment of this
6 Act; and

7 (B) the number of aliens described in sub-
8 section (a)(1).

9 (c) ORDER OF ISSUANCE FOR PREVIOUSLY FILED
10 APPLICATIONS.—The visas made available under this sec-
11 tion shall be issued in accordance with section 202 of the
12 Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1152), as
13 amended by this Act, in the order in which the petitions
14 under section 203 of such Act (8 U.S.C. 1153) were filed.

15 **SEC. 4. KEEPING AMERICAN FAMILIES TOGETHER.**

16 (a) RECLASSIFICATION OF SPOUSES AND MINOR
17 CHILDREN OF LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS AS IM-
18 MEDIATE RELATIVES AND EXEMPTION OF DERIVA-
19 TIVES.—The Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
20 1101 et seq.) is amended—

21 (1) in section 201(b) (8 U.S.C. 1151(b))—

22 (A) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end
23 the following:

24 “(F) Aliens who derive status under section
25 203(d).”; and

(B) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

3 “(2)(A) IMMEDIATE RELATIVES.—Aliens who
4 are immediate relatives.

5 “(B) DEFINITION OF IMMEDIATE RELATIVE.—
6 In this paragraph, the term ‘immediate relative’
7 means—

8 “(i) a child, spouse, or parent of a citizen
9 of the United States, except that in the case of
10 such a parent such citizen shall be at least 21
11 years of age;

“(iii) a child or spouse of an alien described in clause (i), who is accompanying or following to join the alien;

“(iv) a child or spouse of an alien described in clause (ii), who is accompanying or following to join the alien;

20 “(v) an alien admitted under section
21 211(a) on the basis of a prior issuance of a visa
22 to the alien’s accompanying parent who is an
23 immediate relative; and

1 “(vi) an alien born to an alien lawfully ad-
2 mitted for permanent residence during a tem-
3 porary visit abroad.

4 “(C) TREATMENT OF SPOUSE AND CHILDREN
5 OF DECEASED CITIZEN OR LAWFUL PERMANENT
6 RESIDENT.—If an alien who was the spouse or child
7 of a citizen of the United States or of an alien law-
8 fully admitted for permanent residence and was not
9 legally separated from the citizen or lawful perma-
10 nent resident at the time of the citizen’s or lawful
11 permanent resident’s death files a petition under
12 section 204(a)(1)(B), the alien spouse (and each
13 child of the alien) shall remain, for purposes of this
14 paragraph, an immediate relative during the period
15 beginning on the date of the citizen’s or permanent
16 resident’s death and ending on the date on which
17 the alien spouse remarries.

18 “(D) PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF ABUSE.—An
19 alien who has filed a petition under clause (iii) or
20 (iv) of section 204(a)(1)(A) shall remain, for pur-
21 poses of this paragraph, an immediate relative if the
22 United States citizen or lawful permanent resident
23 spouse or parent loses United States citizenship on
24 account of the abuse.”; and

25 (2) in section 203(a) (8 U.S.C. 1153(a))—

1 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “23,400”
2 and inserting “111,334”; and

3 (B) by amending paragraph (2) to read as
4 follows:

5 “(2) UNMARRIED SONS AND UNMARRIED
6 DAUGHTERS OF LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS.—

7 Qualified immigrants who are the unmarried sons or
8 unmarried daughters (but are not the children) of
9 aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence
10 shall be allocated visas in a number not to exceed
11 26,266, plus—

12 “(A) the number of visas by which the
13 worldwide level exceeds 226,000; and

14 “(B) the number of visas not required for
15 the class specified in paragraph (1).”.

16 (b) PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM AGING OUT.—
17 Section 203(h) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
18 U.S.C. 1153(h)) is amended—

19 (1) by amending paragraph (1) to read as fol-
20 lows:

21 “(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of subsection
22 (d), a determination of whether an alien satisfies the
23 age requirement in the matter preceding subparagraph
24 (A) of section 101(b)(1) shall be made using
25 the age of the alien on the date on which the peti-

1 tion is filed with the Secretary of Homeland Security
2 under section 204.”;

3 (2) by amending paragraph (2) to read as fol-
4 lows:

5 “(2) PETITIONS DESCRIBED.—A petition de-
6 scribed in this paragraph is a petition filed under
7 section 204 for classification of—

8 “(A) the alien’s parent under subsection
9 (a), (b), or (c); or

10 “(B) the alien as an immediate relative
11 based on classification as a child of—

12 “(i) a citizen of the United States; or
13 “(ii) a lawful permanent resident.”;

14 (3) in paragraph (3), by striking “subsections
15 (a)(2)(A) and” and inserting “subsection”; and

16 (4) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(5) TREATMENT FOR NONIMMIGRANT CAT-
18 EGORIES PURPOSES.—An alien dependent treated as
19 a child for immigrant visa purposes under this sub-
20 section shall be treated as a dependent child for non-
21 immigrant categories.”.

22 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

23 (1) DEFINITIONS.—Section 101(a)(15)(K)(ii) of
24 the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
25 1101(a)(15)(K)(ii)) is amended by striking “section

1 201(b)(2)(A)(i)” and inserting “section 201(b)(2)
2 (other than clause (v) or (vi) of subparagraph (B))”.

3 (2) RULES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER CER-
4 TAIN ALIENS ARE IMMEDIATE RELATIVES.—Section
5 201(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
6 U.S.C. 1151(f)) is amended—

7 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “para-
8 graphs (2) and (3),” and inserting “paragraph
9 (2),”;

10 (B) by striking paragraph (2);
11 (C) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and
12 (4) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively; and
13 (D) in paragraph (3), as so redesignated,
14 by striking “through (3)” and inserting “and
15 (2)”.

16 (3) PER COUNTRY LEVEL.—Section
17 202(a)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality
18 Act (8 U.S.C. 1152(a)(1)(A)) is amended by striking
19 “section 201(b)(2)(A)(i)” and inserting “section
20 201(b)(2) (other than clause (v) or (vi) of subpara-
21 graph (B))”.

22 (4) NUMERICAL LIMITATION TO ANY SINGLE
23 FOREIGN STATE.—Section 202(a)(4) (8 U.S.C.
24 1152(a)(4)) is amended—

1 (A) by striking subparagraphs (A) and
2 (B);

3 (B) by redesignating subparagraphs (C)
4 and (D) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respec-
5 tively; and

6 (C) in subparagraph (A), as so redesi-
7 gnated—

8 (i) by striking the undesignated mat-
9 ter following clause (ii);

10 (ii) by striking clause (ii);

11 (iii) in clause (i), by striking “, or”
12 and inserting a period; and

13 (iv) in the matter preceding clause (i),
14 by striking “section 203(a)(2)(B) may not
15 exceed” and all that follows through “23
16 percent” in clause (i) and inserting “sec-
17 tion 203(a)(2) may not exceed 23 per-
18 cent”.

19 (5) PROCEDURES FOR GRANTING IMMIGRANT
20 STATUS.—Section 204 of the Immigration and Na-
21 tionality Act (8 U.S.C. 1154) is amended—

22 (A) in subsection (a)—

23 (i) in paragraph (1)—

24 (I) in subparagraph (A)—

1 (aa) in clause (i), by striking
2 “section 201(b)(2)(A)(i)” and in-
3 serting “clause (i) or (ii) of sec-
4 tion 201(b)(2)(B);

5 (bb) in clause (ii), by strik-
6 ing “the second sentence of sec-
7 tion 201(b)(2)(A)(i)” and insert-
8 ing “section 201(b)(2)(C)”;

(cc) by amending clause (iii)
to read as follows:

11 “(iii)(I) An alien who is described in clause
12 (ii) may file a petition with the Secretary of
13 Homeland Security under this subparagraph for
14 classification of the alien (and any child of the
15 alien) if the alien demonstrates to the Secretary
16 that—

“(bb) during the marriage or relationship intended by the alien to be legally a marriage, the alien or a child of the alien has been battered or has been the subject

1 of extreme cruelty perpetrated by the
2 alien's spouse or intended spouse.

3 “(II) For purposes of subclause (I), an
4 alien described in this subclause is an alien—

5 “(aa)(AA) who is the spouse of a cit-
6 izen of the United States or lawful perma-
7 nent resident;

8 “(BB) who believed that he or she
9 had married a citizen of the United States
10 or lawful permanent resident and with
11 whom a marriage ceremony was actually
12 performed and who otherwise meets any
13 applicable requirements under this Act to
14 establish the existence of and bona fides of
15 a marriage, but whose marriage is not le-
16 gitimate solely because of the bigamy of
17 such citizen of the United States or lawful
18 permanent resident; or

19 “(CC) who was a bona fide spouse of
20 a citizen of the United States or a lawful
21 permanent resident within the past 2 years
22 and whose spouse died within the past 2
23 years, whose spouse renounced citizenship
24 status or renounced or lost status as a law-
25 ful permanent resident within the past 2

1 years related to an incident of domestic vi-
2 olence, or who demonstrates a connection
3 between the legal termination of the mar-
4 riage within the past 2 years and battering
5 or extreme cruelty by a spouse who is a
6 citizen of the United States or a lawful
7 permanent resident spouse;

8 “(bb) who is a person of good moral
9 character;

10 “(cc) who is eligible to be classified as
11 an immediate relative under section
12 201(b)(2)(B) or who would have been so
13 classified but for the bigamy of the citizen
14 of the United States or lawful permanent
15 resident that the alien intended to marry;
16 and

17 “(dd) who has resided with the alien’s
18 spouse or intended spouse.”;

19 (dd) by amending clause (iv)
20 to read as follows:

21 “(iv) An alien who is the child of a citizen
22 or lawful permanent resident of the United
23 States, or who was a child of a United States
24 citizen or lawful permanent resident parent who
25 within the past 2 years lost or renounced citi-

1 zenship status related to an incident of domes-
2 tic violence, and who is a person of good moral
3 character, who is eligible to be classified as an
4 immediate relative under section 201(b)(2)(B),
5 and who resides, or has resided in the past,
6 with the citizen or lawful permanent resident
7 parent may file a petition with the Secretary of
8 Homeland Security under this subparagraph for
9 classification of the alien (and any child of the
10 alien) under such section if the alien dem-
11 onstrates to the Secretary that the alien has
12 been battered by or has been the subject of ex-
13 treme cruelty perpetrated by the alien's citizen
14 or lawful permanent resident parent. For pur-
15 poses of this clause, residence includes any pe-
16 riod of visitation.”; and

17 (ee) in clause (v)(I), in the
18 matter preceding item (aa), by
19 inserting “or lawful permanent
20 resident” after “citizen”;

21 (ff) in clause (vi), by strik-
22 ing “renunciation of citizenship”
23 and all that follows through “citi-
24 zenship status” and inserting
25 “renunciation of citizenship or

1 lawful permanent resident status,
2 death of the abuser, divorce, or
3 changes to the abuser's citizen-
4 ship or lawful permanent resident
5 status"; and

6 (gg) in clause (vii), by strik-
7 ing "section 201(b)(2)(A)(i)"
8 each place it appears and insert-
9 ing "section 201(b)(2)(B)";
10 (II) by amending subparagraph
11 (B) to read as follows:

12 "(B)(i)(I) Except as provided in subclause
13 (II), any alien lawfully admitted for permanent
14 residence claiming that an alien is entitled to a
15 classification by reason of the relationship de-
16 scribed in section 203(a)(2) may file a petition
17 with the Attorney General for such classifica-
18 tion.

19 "(II) Subclause (I) shall not apply in the
20 case of an alien lawfully admitted for perma-
21 nent residence who has been convicted of a
22 specified offense against a minor (as defined in
23 subparagraph (A)(viii)(II)), unless the Sec-
24 retary of Homeland Security, in the Secretary's
25 sole and unreviewable discretion, determines

1 that such person poses no risk to the alien with
2 respect to whom a petition described in sub-
3 clause (I) is filed.

4 “(ii) An alien who was the child of a lawful per-
5 manent resident who within the past 2 years lost
6 lawful permanent resident status due to an incident
7 of domestic violence, and who is a person of good
8 moral character, who is eligible for classification
9 under section 203(a)(2), and who resides, or has re-
10 sided in the past, with the alien’s permanent resi-
11 dent alien parent may file a petition with the Sec-
12 retary of Homeland Security under this subpara-
13 graph for classification of the alien (and any child
14 of the alien) under such section if the alien dem-
15 onstrates to the Secretary that the alien has been
16 battered by or has been the subject of extreme cru-
17 elty perpetrated by the alien’s permanent resident
18 parent.

19 “(iii)(I) For purposes of a petition filed or ap-
20 proved under clause (ii), the loss of lawful perma-
21 nent resident status by a parent after the filing of
22 a petition under that clause shall not adversely af-
23 fect approval of the petition, and for an approved
24 petition, shall not affect the alien’s ability to adjust
25 status under subsections (a) and (c) of section 245

1 or obtain status as a lawful permanent resident
2 based on an approved self-petition under clause (ii).

3 “(II) Upon the lawful permanent resident par-
4 ent becoming or establishing the existence of United
5 States citizenship through naturalization, acquisition
6 of citizenship, or other means, any petition filed with
7 the Secretary of Homeland Security and pending or
8 approved under clause (ii) on behalf of an alien who
9 has been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty
10 shall be deemed reclassified as a petition filed under
11 subparagraph (A) even if the acquisition of citizen-
12 ship occurs after the termination of parental
13 rights.”; and

18 (ii) in paragraph (2)—

24 (II) in the undesignated matter
25 following subparagraph (A)(ii), by

(B) in subsection (c)(1), by striking “or preference status”; and

(C) in subsection (k)(1), by striking “203(a)(2)(B)” and inserting “203(a)(2)”.

1 (9) REFUGEE CRISIS IN IRAQ ACT OF 2007.—

2 Section 1243(a)(4) of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act
3 of 2007 (Public Law 110–118; 8 U.S.C. 1157 note)
4 is amended by striking “section 201(b)(2)(A)(i)”
5 and inserting “section 201(b)(2) (other than clause
6 (v) or (vi) of subparagraph (B))”.

7 (10) PROCESSING OF VISA APPLICATIONS.—

8 Section 233(b)(1) of the Department of State Au-
9 thorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–
10 228; 8 U.S.C. 1201 note) is amended by striking
11 “section 201(b)(2)(A)(i)” and inserting “section
12 201(b)(2) (other than clause (v) or (vi) of subpara-
13 graph (B))”.

