

Background on the RAISE Act

August 2017



On August 2, Senators David Perdue (R-GA) and Tom Cotton (R-AR), alongside the President, introduced the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Economy Act, known as [the RAISE Act](#) (S. 354), that proposes to radically reduce legal immigration to the United States. The bill would need 60 votes in the Senate to pass. Since the measure will be seen as extreme by all Democrats and even some Republicans, it is likely that it will not be able to cross the 60 vote threshold. More specifically, the RAISE Act would:

- Reduce the number of family-sponsored immigrants by no longer allowing U.S. citizens and permanent residents to “sponsor” adult children, parents, siblings, and fiancé for citizenship. The bill would retain only two categories for sponsorship: spouses and unmarried minor children.
- Change the age limit for a minor from 21 to 18 and would lower capped family categories from 226,000 green cards presently to 88,000.
- Allow parents to be sponsored under a temporary immigrant visa if the U.S. sponsors can demonstrate that the parents have health-care coverage and accept full responsibility for their economic support. **Parents would be barred from any public benefit, even provided by a state or local government (this provision would very likely be debated in court).**
- End a visa diversity lottery that has awarded 50,000 green cards a year, usually provided to individuals from countries with low rates of U.S. immigration.
- Limit U.S. acceptance of refugees to 50,000 a year. This provision was also part of the ‘Travel Ban’ executive order that is awaiting to be heard by the Supreme Court in October.
- Create a point system to distribute the 140,000 employment-based green cards provided annually. Through this point based system applicants will be scored on English ability, education levels and job skills.
- Bar immigrants who obtain a points-based visa (which family-sponsored immigrants would be subject to) as well as “every member of their household” from receiving federal means-tested benefits for five years after the visa is issued. **This means that newly arrived immigrants and those living with them would not qualify for programs like Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and SSI.**

As mentioned, the RAISE Act would replace the current visa selection process with a points system in which intending immigrants would earn points for:

- Having a relatively high-paying job offer, with more points for a higher salary (maximum of 13 points)
- High English test scores (maximum of 12 points)
- Age, with those closest to age 25 earning the most points (maximum of 10 points)
- Educational attainment, with more points for degrees earned in the United States, and for advanced degrees in a STEM field (maximum of 13 points)
- Investing at least \$1.35 million in the United States (maximum of 12 points)
- Extraordinary achievement: earning a Nobel Prize or equivalent, or being an Olympic-caliber athlete (maximum of 25 points)
- Having been in line for an eliminated visa category (2 points).