



## **TAKEAWAYS: Overview of Family-Based Immigration And the Effects of Limiting Chain Migration**

As a result of our historically conservative principles aimed at reuniting and preserving nuclear families, as well as facilitating quick assimilation, our migration system centers around giving preference to immigrants with family already in the U.S.

Reforming family-based immigration has been discussed as a component of a deal legalizing Dreamers. But many legislative proposals that reduce the scope of family sponsorship for an immigrant visa, and do not reallocate those visas to employment-based or skills-based immigrant populations, **will lead to significantly lower levels of immigration in the long term.**

### *Economic Impacts*

Including the RAISE Act, any legislation lowering immigration levels will have **substantial, negative effects on economic growth, leading to a smaller labor force, less entrepreneurship, and less innovation.**

Below is a synopsis of how various reform proposals affect the gross domestic product (GDP) (available in more detail in full report). Thirty years from now—in 2047—we predict that U.S. GDP will be about \$34 trillion (in 2016 dollars) if current trends continue, and depending on implementation of family-based immigration reform proposals:

- **↑ \$ 150 B**, under the SUCCEED Act
- **↓ \$ 1,390 B**, under the RAISE Act
- **↓ \$ 200 B**, if preference immigration is restricted to spouses and children under 18 (*see Scenario 1*)
- **↓ \$ 520 B**, if both immediate relative and preference immigration is restricted to spouses and children under 18 (*see Scenario 2*)

### *Recommendations*

Assessing proposals to reallocate family-based immigration visas to merit-based immigration streams is outside the scope of the report; however, we do make the following recommendations:

1. No reform of family-preference migration should reduce future levels of total immigration;
2. Congress should increase statutory caps on yearly immigrant visa issuance and adopt temporary larger caps to shrink existing waitlists. A compromise position could pair such increases with a cap on the number of sponsorship petitions from a single sponsor in a given length of time;
3. The State Department should be required to estimate the size of statutory caps to keep the lengths of immigrant visa waitlists from growing, as well as the size and duration of temporary caps to shrink visa waitlists to targeted lengths; and
4. As a supplement to the Visa Bulletin, the State Department should be required to publish tables of estimated wait times based on immigrant visa category, priority date, and nationality.

Read the full report [here](#).

#### Contact Information

Kristie De Peña, Senior Immigration Counsel, [kdepena@niskanencenter.org](mailto:kdepena@niskanencenter.org)  
Jeremy Neufeld, Immigration Policy Fellow, [jneufeld@niskanencenter.org](mailto:jneufeld@niskanencenter.org)