

# REUNITING FAMILIES ACT

The Reuniting Families Act ([H.R. 5560](#)) is a visionary bill that modernizes and reforms family immigration by reducing the backlog, ensuring families or more shapes and sizes can be together, and breaking down barriers that block loved ones from accessing the family-based system. Introduced multiple times in Congress over the years, the Reuniting Families was most recently updated and reintroduced by Representative Judy Chu.

Many legislators have looked to the Reuniting Families Act for family-based immigration reform: the U.S. Citizenship Act this year and last year included the Reuniting Families Act in its entirety, while pieces of the bill were also folded into last year's Build Back Better Act and this year's bipartisan Dignity Act. In the public sphere, the Reuniting Families Act has also been endorsed by over 120 national, regional, state and local organizations, including members of the Value our Families (VoF) coalition.

## WHAT DOES THE BILL DO?



### Shorten backlogs

- Fix a drafting error to make sure all available visas are used every year
- "Recapture" or use over 200,000 visas that were available but weren't used since 1992

- Double the number of family-preference visas available
- Reclassify more family members as immediate relatives
- Raise the country quota from 7 to 20 percent
- Count family units under one visas so that more visas are available for use
- Ensure no one waits more than 10 years for a visa if they have an approved application

## **Address discrimination and promote diversity**

- Recognize LGBTQ+ partners as spouses
- Extend citizenship to children with a citizen parent, regardless of biological relationship
- Treat stepchildren, adoptees and children born through assisted reproductive technology the same as children
- Protect children from “aging out” of status or from the application process
- Allow people to stay in the application process even if their sponsoring relative dies
- Expand the diversity visa program from admitting 55,000 to 80,000 immigrants
- Provide visas to people blocked from using their diversity visas because of the Muslim and African bans and Covid-19 closures

## **Keep families together**

- Prohibit the deportation of people in the application process
- Expand the opportunity to defend against deportation and to adjust status
- Protect family members without status from being punished from “re-entry bars” that prevent them from adjusting status
- Prioritize family reunification in the refugee resettlement process

# WHAT WOULD IT MEAN FOR US?

## Time together

Every day, year and decade our loved ones have to wait in the backlog are countless moments taken from our families: missed birthdays, holidays, weddings, graduations and even funerals. Also lost are the everyday moments shared between loved ones: dinner around the table, school drop-offs, walks to the park, and weekend family time.

## Peace of mind

For people in the backlog—whether stuck abroad or trying to adjust status in the U.S.—the uncertainty of when they will receive a green card puts all families in limbo. Various factors clog up the backlog, so the wait often feels indefinite and forces many to put life decisions on hold while their families are still apart: purchasing a home, having children, starting a business. For mixed-status families, the looming threat of deportation is devastating and leaves families in a constant state of distress.

## Family care

For many families, it takes a village to raise a child—meaning grandparents, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles often serve as caregivers. With backlogs keeping relatives indefinitely waiting for the opportunity to enter the country, many households remain strapped without the full support of family in their homes. Nor is caregiving exclusive needed by children, as many aging Americans simply cannot wait any longer for a green card for their loved ones to come and take care of them.

## Community and economic growth

As relatives immigrate to the U.S. through the family-based system, they also bring with them their talents. Once settled into their new homes, many family members go on to join the workforce and start local businesses. Whether they arrived through family-based or other immigration pathways, immigrants make up a critical part of the essential workforce: healthcare, food and hospitality, agriculture, transportation, and housing and facilities. New immigrant family members also build community connections by volunteering, joining sports and recreation clubs, attending houses of workshop, and supporting local businesses.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

## Broaden support for the bill

- Call, write and tweet at your member of Congress and urge them to cosponsor the Reuniting Families Act if they haven't already! [bit.ly/vof-action](https://bit.ly/vof-action)

## Get involved

- Sign up for updates and information on how to join and work with the Value our Families movement! [www.valueourfamilies.org/get-involved](https://www.valueourfamilies.org/get-involved)