

The Immigration Act of 1924

The Immigration Act of 1924 created a permanent quota system (that of 1921 was only temporary), reducing the 1921 annual quota from 358,000 to 164,000. In addition, the Act reduced the immigration limit from 3 percent to 2 percent of each foreign-born group living in the United States in 1890. Using 1890 rather than 1910 or 1920 excluded the new wave of foreign-born from southern and eastern Europe from quotas truly proportionate to their new numbers in the population. Finally, the act provided for a future reduction of the quota to 154,000. The new law cut the quota for northern and western European countries by 29 percent, but slashed that for southern and eastern Europe by 87 percent. Italy's quota, for example, was reduced from 42,057 to 3,845 persons. In addition, all immigrants now had to obtain a visa from an American consul in their country of origin. Since part of the thrust of the 1924 law was to select those best suited to American society, this system permitted an initial screening of immigrants. The quota system did not apply to countries in the Western Hemisphere. The United States did not want to alienate its neighbors, and it needed workers, especially those from Mexico. During World Wars I and II, the U.S. recruited thousands of temporary workers from Mexico to harvest crops in our labor-short farmland. In 1929 the quota system based on national origin went into effect. In the 1930s, immigration to the United States markedly decreased, in part because of the 1929 Act, but also because of worldwide economic depression. Large portions of most quotas were therefore unfilled. At the same time, thousands of persons sought to flee totalitarian regimes like that in Nazi Germany. Since American immigration policies failed to distinguish between immigrants and refugees in the quota counts, most of the refugees (principally Jews) were barred from coming to the United States. From 1924 to 1947, only 2,718,006 immigrants came to the United States, a total equal to the number entering during any two-year period before World War I. In the 1930s, for the first time in U.S. history, those leaving the United States outnumbered those entering.

"An act to limit the migration of aliens into the United States..." (approved May 26, 1924). The Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from December, 1923 to March, 1925. Vol. XLII, Part 1, pp. 153-169 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925.)

SIXTY EIGHTH CONGRESS. SESS.I. Ch. 185, 190. 1924. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Immigration Act of 1924"

... DEFINITION OF IMMIGRANT. SEC. 3. When used in this Act the term "immigrant" means an alien departing from any place outside the United States destined for the United States, except (1) a government official, his family, attendants, servants, and employees, (2) an alien visiting the United States temporarily as a tourist or temporarily for business or pleasure, (3) an alien in continuous transit through the United States, (4) an alien lawfully admitted to the United States who later goes in transit from one part of the United States to another through foreign contiguous territory, (5) a bona fide alien seaman serving as such on a vessel arriving at a port of the United States and seeking to enter temporarily the United States solely in the pursuit of his calling as a seaman, and (6) an alien entitled to enter the United States solely to carry on trade under and in pursuance of the provisions of a present existing treaty of commerce and navigation.

NON-QUOTA IMMIGRANTS. SEC. 4. When used in this Act the term "non-quota immigrant" means- (a) An immigrant who is the unmarried child under 18 years of age, or the wife, of a citizen of the United States who resides therein at the time of the filing of a petition under section 9; (b) An immigrant previously lawfully admitted to the United States, who is returning from a temporary visit abroad; (c) An immigrant who was born in the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Mexico, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone, or an independent country of Central or South America, and his wife, and his unmarried children under 18 years of age, if accompanying or following to join him; (d) An immigrant who continuously for at least two years immediately preceding the time of his application for admission to the United States has been, and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of, carrying on the vocation of minister of any religious denomination, or professor of a college, academy, seminary, or university; and his wife, and his unmarried children under 18 years of age, if accompanying or following to join him; or (e) An immigrant who is a bona fide student at least 15 years of age and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of study at an accredited school, college, academy, seminary, or university, particularly designated by him and approved by, the Secretary of labor, which shall have agreed to report to the Secretary of Labor the termination of attendance of each immigrant student, and if any such institution of learning fails to make such reports promptly the approval shall be withdrawn. ...

...EXCLUSION FROM UNITED STATES. SEC. 13. (a) No immigrant shall be admitted to the United States unless he (1) has an unexpired immigration visa or was born subsequent to the issuance of the immigration visa of the accompanying parent, (2) is of the nationality specified in the visa in the immigration visa, (3) is a non-quota immigrant if specified in the visa in the immigration visa as such, and (4) is otherwise admissible under the immigration laws. (b) In such classes of cases and under such conditions as may be by regulations prescribed immigrants who have been legally admitted to the United States and who depart therefrom temporarily may be admitted to the United States without being required to obtain an immigration visa. (c) No alien ineligible to citizenship shall be admitted to the United States unless such alien (1) is admissible as a non-quota immigrant under the provisions of subdivision (b), (d), or (e) of section 4, or (2) is the wife, or the unmarried child under 18 years of age, of an immigrant admissible under such subdivision (d), and is accompanying or following to join him, or (3) is not an immigrant as defined in section 3. (d) The Secretary of Labor may admit to the United States any otherwise admissible immigrant not admissible under clause (2) or (3) of subdivision (a) of this section, if satisfied that such inadmissibility was not known to, and could not have been ascertained by the exercise of reasonable diligence by, such immigrant prior to the departure of the vessel from the last port outside the United States and outside foreign contiguous territory or, in the case of an immigrant coming from foreign contiguous territory, prior to the application of the immigrant for admission. (e) No quota immigrant shall be admitted under subdivision (d) if the entire number of immigration visas which may be issued to quota immigrants of the same nationality for the fiscal year already been issued. If such entire number of immigration visas has not been issued, then the Secretary of State, upon the admission of a quota immigrant under subdivision (d), shall reduce by one the number of immigration visas which may be issued to quota immigrants of the same nationality during the fiscal year in which such immigrant is admitted; but if the Secretary of State finds that it will not be practicable to make such reduction before the end of such fiscal year, then such immigrant shall not be admitted. (f) Nothing in this section shall authorize the remission or refunding of a fine, liability to which has accrued under section 16. ...

...SEC 28. As used in this Act- (a) The term "United States," when used in a geographical sense, means the States, the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii, the District of Columbia, Porto Rico, and the Virgin Islands; and the term "continental United States " means the States and the District of Columbia; (b) The term "alien" includes any individual not a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States, but this definition shall not be held to include Indians of the United States not taxed, nor citizens of the islands under the jurisdiction of the United States; (c) The term "ineligible to citizenship," when used in reference to any individual, includes an individual who is debarred from becoming a citizen of the United States under section 2169 of the Revised Statutes, or under section 14 of the Act entitled "An Act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese," approved May 6, 1882, or under section 1996, 1997, or 1998 of the Revised Statutes, as amended, or under section 2 of the Act entitled "An Act to authorize the President to increase temporarily the Military Establishment of the United States," approved May 18, 1917, as amended, or under law amendatory of, supplementary to, or in substitution for, any of such sections; (d) The term "immigration visa" means an immigration visa issued by a consular officer under the provisions of this Act; (e) The term "consular officer" means any consular or diplomatic officer of the United States designated, under regulations prescribed under this Act, for the purpose of issuing immigration visas under this Act. In case of the Canal Zone and the insular possessions of the United States the term "consular officer" (except as used in section 24) means an officer designated by the President, or by his authority, for the purpose of issuing immigration visas under this Act; (f) The term "Immigration Act of 1917" means the Act of February 5, 1917, entitled "An Act to regulate the immigration of aliens to, and the residence of aliens in, the United States"; (g) The term "immigration laws" includes such Act, this Act, and all laws, conventions, and treaties of the United States relating to the immigration, exclusion, or expulsion of aliens; (h) The term "person" includes individuals, partnerships, corporations, and associations; (i) The term "Commissioner General" means the Commissioner General of Immigration; (j) The term "application for admission" has reference to the application for admission to the United States and not to the application for the issuance of the immigration visa; (k) The term " permit " means a permit issued under section 10; (l) The term "unmarried," when used in reference to any as of any time, means an individual who at such time is not married, whether or not previously married; (m) The terms "child," "father," and "mother," do not include child or parent by adoption unless the adoption took place before January 1, 1924; (n) The terms "wife" and "husband" do not include a wife husband by reason of a proxy or picture marriage.

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Comprehensive Immigration Law (1924)

A Proclamation

Whereas it is provided in the act of Congress approved May 26, 1924, entitled "An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States, and for other purposes" that "The annual quota of any nationality shall be two per centum of the number of foreign-born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States Census of 1890, but the minimum quota of any nationality shall be 100 (Sec. 11 a). . . .

"The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Labor, jointly, shall, as soon as feasible after the enactment of this act, prepare a statement showing the number of individuals of the various nationalities resident in continental United States as determined by the United States Census of 1890, which statement shall be the population basis for the purposes of subdivision (a) of section 11 (Sec. 12 b).

"Such officials shall, jointly, report annually to the President the quota of each nationality under subdivision (a) of section 11, together with the statements, estimates, and revisions provided for in this section. The President shall proclaim and make known the quotas so reported". (Sec. 12 e).

Now, therefore I, Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States of America acting under and by virtue of the power in me vested by the aforesaid act of Congress, do hereby proclaim and make known that on and after July 1, 1924, and throughout the fiscal year 1924-1925, the quota of each nationality provided in said act shall be as follows:

COUNTRY OR AREA OF BIRTH	QUOTA 1924-25
Afghanistan	100
Albania	100
Andorra	100
Arabian Peninsula	100
Armenia	124
Australia (incl. Papua, Tasmania & all islands)	121
Austria	785
Belgium	512
Bhutan	100
Bulgaria	100
Cameroon (proposed British mandate)	100
Cameroon (French mandate)	100
China	100
Czechoslovakia	3,073
Danzig, Free City of	228
Denmark	789
Egypt	100
Estonia	124
Ethiopia (Abyssinia)	100
Finland	170
France	3,954
Germany	51,227
Great Britain & Northern Ireland	34,007
Greece	100

Hungary	473
Iceland	100
India	100
Iraq (Mesopotamia)	100
Irish Free State	28,567
Italy (incl. Rhodes, Dodecanesia & Castellorizzo)	3,845
Japan	100
Latvia	142
Liberia	100
Liechtenstein	100
Lithuania	344
Luxemburg	100
Monaco	100
Morocco (French & Spanish Zones & Tangier)	100
Muscat (Oman)	100
Nauru (proposed British mandate)	100
Nepal	100
Netherlands	1,648
New Zealand (incl. appertaining islands)	100
Norway	6,453
New Guinea (& other Pacific islands under Australian mandate)	100
Palestine (with Trans-Jordan, proposed British mandate)	100
Persia	100
Poland	5,982
Portugal	503
Ruanda & Urundi (Belgium mandate)	100
Rumania	603
Russia (European & Asiatic)	2,248
Samoa, Western (proposed mandate of New Zealand)	100
San Marino	100
Siam	100
South Africa, Union of	100
South West Africa (proposed mandate of Union of South Africa)	100
Spain	131
Sweden	9,561
Switzerland	2,081
Syria & The Lebanon (French mandate)	100
Tanganiyika (proposed British mandate)	100
Togoland (proposed British mandate)	100
Togoland (French mandate)	100
Turkey	100
Yap & other Pacific islands (under Japanese Mandate)	100
Yugoslavia	671

GENERAL NOTE.-The immigration quotas assigned to the various countries and quota-areas should not be regarded as having any political significance whatever, or as involving recognition of new governments, or of new boundaries, or of transfers of territory except as the United States Government has already made such recognition in a formal and official manner. . . . Calvin Coolidge.

Source: Civics Online (<http://www.civics-online.org>)