



RAISE Act: Bill Analysis

The Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy Act ([RAISE Act](#)), S. 354, was reintroduced by Sens. Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) and David Perdue (R-Georgia) on August 2, 2017. The legislation would significantly cut legal immigration by eliminating most of the current family immigration categories, eliminating the diversity visa program, and limiting refugee admissions. In addition, it would replace the current employer-based immigration visa system with a point-based system.

The legislation is expected to [reduce legal immigration](#) by 41 percent in the first year and 50 percent over 10 years. Economists [agree](#) that cutting legal immigration by this much would hurt our economy's growth. One [estimate](#) is that the RAISE Act would cut GDP growth by 2 percent and result in a loss of 4 ½ million jobs. The point-based system proposed by the RAISE Act would not address the nation's need for workers [at various skill levels](#).

Specifically, the RAISE Act would:

Harm family unity. Under the bill, U.S. citizens would no longer be able to sponsor their adult children, their parents, and their brothers and sisters to immigrate. In fiscal year 2015, U.S. citizens sponsored nearly 133,000 parents, over 60,000 siblings, and over 48,000 married and unmarried children over 21. By changing the definition of "child" to include only those under 18, rather than 21, it would further limit the ability of U.S. citizen parents to sponsor their young adult children who are seeking to immigrate to the U.S. The bill would invalidate any pending applications in these categories that were filed after the bill was introduced.

Eliminate Employment-Based Immigration Categories. The bill would replace the current system for 140,000 employer-based legal visas with a point-based system for all non-family based immigrants. The points would be assigned based on age (ranging from zero points for anyone 17 or younger to a maximum of 10 points for someone age 26 to 30 to 2 points for someone age 46 to 51), education levels (ranging from 1 point for a high school diploma to 13 points for a U.S. professional or doctorate in a STEM field), English proficiency, salary, levels of foreign investment and extraordinary achievement (such as for Nobel Laureates and Olympic athletes). Instead of allowing employers to have input in selecting immigrants they want to sponsor for jobs, this provision would establish general criteria for "qualified" immigrants. Immigrant skill levels are already [rising](#), from 2010 to 2014, 84 percent of immigrants admitted legally had a high school education or higher (compared to 88 percent of those born in the U.S.) and 48 percent of immigrants coming in between 2011 and 2015 had a college degree (compared to 31 percent of adults born in the U.S.).

Limit Refugee Admissions to 50,000 each year. Since the Refugee Act of 1980 has been in effect, the average annual number of refugees admitted to the U.S. is approximately 83,000. The U.S. currently resettles a tiny fraction of those who have fled their country. In 2016, we admitted about 85,000 refugees out of 65 million people currently displaced worldwide. Once acclimated to their new lives in the U.S., refugees make positive contributions to the U.S. economy. Businesses across America recognize the value of the refugee workforce, which plays a

significant role in many sectors in the U.S. economy, including hospitality and the food service industry, teaching, and the fields of engineering, nursing and medicine.

Eliminate the Diversity Visa Program. Currently, 50,000 visas are allocated on a lottery basis to countries that have historically low rates of immigration to the U.S. The visas are distributed among six geographic regions and no country may receive more than 7 percent of the available visas for that year. The Diversity Visa Program was designed to demonstrate our commitment to openness and equal opportunity by addressing the problem that people without family ties to the United States had almost no opportunity to legally immigrate. In 2015, [42 percent of European immigrants and 37 percent of African](#) had diversity visas.