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Fact Sheets

Randomness Cannot Have a Place in our Immigration System

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Quote

I'm calling on Congress to immediately terminate the diversity visa lottery program. It's a disaster for our country. This program grants visas not on the basis of merit, but simply because applicants are randomly selected in an annual lottery.

President Donald J. Trump

ENDING THE VISA LOTTERY: President Donald J. Trump has proposed ending the visa lottery system and reallocating the visas it currently distributes.

- President Trump has proposed an immigration framework that would eliminate the visa lottery.
- The visas currently allocated at random by the visa lottery would be reallocated to reduce waitlists in nuclear family-based and high-skilled employment immigration.

IMMIGRATION BASED ON MERIT, NOT CHANCE: Eliminating the visa lottery system will take chance out of our immigration system, and help direct immigrant selection towards merit and skill.

- The United States awards up to 50,000 visas to foreign nationals each year through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, also known as the visa lottery.
 - The visas generally are awarded to applicants from countries that have had low rates of immigration to the United States over the previous five years.
- The system selects visa lottery entrants at random, allowing them to apply for a visa that allows them to obtain lawful permanent residence in the United States.
- Visa lottery winners who are granted lawful permanent residence are then able to sponsor other family members for admission into the United States as lawful permanent residents.
 - Lawful permanent residents who are admitted to the United States through the visa lottery system have access to a path to citizenship, which allows them to sponsor an even wider network of extended family members for immigration into the United States.
- Visa lottery winners are only required to have a high school education or two years of work experience during the prior five years in occupations requiring at least two years of training or experience.
 - As a result of these low qualifying standards, there is no guarantee that those admitted to the U.S. through the visa lottery system can contribute positively to the United States or assimilate successfully.
- A recent Harvard-Harris poll showed that more than two thirds of those polled, 68 percent, opposed a lottery that randomly picks 50,000 people to enter the United States each year for greater diversity.
 - A majority of those polled who identified Democrats, 62 percent, were opposed, as well as 65 percent of those who identified as independent.

SYSTEMIC VULNERABILITIES: The visa lottery system has long been susceptible to national security risk and rampant fraud and abuse.

- Past reports show that the visa lottery system has a long history of vulnerability to fraud and abuse.
- A report published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2007 found that the visa lottery program was vulnerable to fraud committed by and against lottery applicants.
 - The GAO report stated that difficulties in verifying applicant identities raised potential security implications.
- In 2003, the State Department Office of Inspector General (OIG) authored a report that found the program was subject to widespread abuse.
 - The OIG found that despite restrictions against duplicate visa lottery submissions, thousands of duplicate submissions were detected each year.
 - The report asserted that identity fraud was endemic to the system and that it was commonplace for applicants to use fraudulent documents.
- The visa lottery program poses a potential national security threat by admitting new residents from countries designated as "State Sponsors of Terrorism" and putting them on a path to citizenship through naturalization.
 - From 2007 to 2016, the United States granted nearly 30,000 permanent residence visas through the visa lottery program to individuals from countries designated as "State Sponsors of Terrorism."

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