

Reuniting Families Act

Endorsed By: *Alliance San Diego, America's Voice Education Fund, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus, Asian Americans Advancing Justice –Atlanta, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Chicago, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA), Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Center for Community Change, Church World Service, Council on American Islamic Relations(CAIR), Equality California, Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), Hispanic Federation, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, League of United Latin American Citizens, National Action Network, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA), National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF), National Center for Transgender Equality, National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), National Council of Jewish Women Inc., National Employment Law Project, National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA), National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC), Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates, San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC), Southern Border Communities Coalition, Undocublack, United We Dream, UnidosUS, We Belong Together*

Bill Summary

The current family-based immigration system has not been updated in 20 years—keeping spouses, children, and their parents separated for years and often decades. The Reuniting Families Act would reduce family immigration visa backlogs and promote humane and timely reunification of immigrant families.

There are over **4.4 million people** in the family immigration backlog waiting unconscionable periods of time to reunite with their family members. The bill reflects our family values and reunites family members to strengthen our communities and our economy. Specifically, the bill's provisions propose the following changes, additions, or deletions:

- **Recaptures Immigrant Visas Lost to Bureaucratic Delay**—The bill recaptures unused employment-based and family-sponsored visas from fiscal years 1992-2016. For future years, unused visa numbers will automatically “roll over” to the next fiscal year.
- **Reclassifies Spouses & Minor Children of Green Card Holders as “Immediate Relatives”**—The bill helps spouses and children under the age of 21 of lawful permanent residents who are waiting in line to reunite with their families by reclassifying them as “immediate relatives,” a category not subject to annual numerical limits.
- **Eliminates Per-Country Limits**—The bill addresses the decades-long backlogs from certain countries by eliminating the per-country immigration limits.
- **Provides Greater Enforcement Relief for Families**—The bill increases the government's discretion and flexibility in addressing numerous hardships, including

family separation, caused by a provision that bars individuals unlawfully present in the United States from utilizing our legal immigration system.

- **Eliminates Bars to Admissibility**—The bill allows families to be reunited without the fear of permanent separation by eliminating bars to admission triggered by unlawful presence in the United States.
- **Provides Relief for Orphans and Widows**—The bill protects widows, widowers, and orphans by allowing them to continue to wait in line for a visa after the death of a sponsoring relative.
- **Creates Exemption from Family Visa Limit for Certain Sons & Daughters of Veterans from the Philippines**—The bill would honor the contribution of Filipino World War II veterans by reducing their children’s waiting times for family-based visas.
- **Allows for Equal Treatment of All Stepchildren**—The bill affords the same protection to the children of fiancés of U.S. citizens, preventing them from aging out of the visa application process that other married immigrant visa holders have pursuant to the Child Status Protection Act. The bill also provides equal treatment for stepchildren by allowing stepchildren under the age of 21 to be reclassified as “immediate relatives” upon their parent’s marriage (*current age limit is 18*).
- **Ensures Retention of Priority Dates**—The bill corrects a drafting error in the Child Status Protection Act to protect children from aging out of the visa application as a result of processing delays on the part of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or the Department of State. The bill also provides that a beneficiary of any family- or employment-based petition shall retain his or her earliest priority date regardless of the category of subsequent petitions.
- **Includes H.R. 519 - *Uniting American Families Act (113th Congress)*** —The bill eliminates discrimination facing LGBT families throughout our immigration laws. It permits citizens and legal permanent residents in binational same-sex relationships to sponsor their permanent partner for immigration to the U.S. Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on June 26, 2013 in *United States v. Windsor*, this bill will help individuals whose permanent partner is from a country that does not recognize same-sex marriage. It will also ensure that same-sex refugee partners are resettled together and that asylum grantees can have their non-married partners “follow to join” them in the U.S.