



December 19, 2025

PM-602-0193

## Policy Memorandum

**SUBJECT:** Hold and Review of Pending USCIS Adjustment of Status Applications Filed by Aliens Under the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program

### Purpose

Effective immediately, this memorandum directs U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) personnel to:

1. Place a hold<sup>1</sup> on all pending adjustment of status, ancillary benefits, and associated waiver applications, for aliens<sup>2</sup> who are applying to adjust to lawful permanent resident status under the Diversity Immigrant Visa (DV) Program<sup>3</sup> pending a comprehensive review;<sup>4</sup> and
2. Conduct a comprehensive review of all policies, procedures, and screening and vetting processes for adjustment of status, ancillary benefits, and associated waiver applications<sup>5</sup> by aliens seeking adjustment of status under the DV Program.<sup>6</sup>

This directive mandates that all aliens with pending adjustment of status, ancillary benefits, and waiver applications meeting these criteria undergo a thorough review process, including an interview for the Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status (Form I-485)<sup>7</sup> and, if necessary, a re-interview, to fully assess all national security, criminal, and related grounds of inadmissibility and deportation.<sup>8</sup> All case decisions and reviews are done on a case-by-case basis

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<sup>1</sup> A “hold” allows a case to proceed through processing, up to final adjudication. A “final adjudication” refers to the issuance of a final decision on a case, such as an approval, denial, or dismissal.

<sup>2</sup> The term “alien” means any person not a citizen or national of the United States. See INA 101(a)(3).

<sup>3</sup> The DV Program allows aliens from countries with low immigration rates to the United States to submit an entry for a chance to apply for an immigrant visa in the next fiscal year. See INA 203(c).

<sup>4</sup> The spouse or child of a DV principal applicant accompanying or following to join as a DV derivative applicant is not automatically or broadly exempt from this hold.

<sup>5</sup> Applications associated with the adjustment of status under the DV Program include Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status); Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) under 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(9); Form I-131 (Application for Travel Documents, Parole Documents, and Arrival/Departure Records); Form I-601 (Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility); Form I-212 (Application for Permission to Reapply for Admission into the United States After Deportation or Removal); and Form I-824 (Application for Action on an Approved Application or Petition). No other applications, petitions, or benefit requests are included in this hold.

<sup>6</sup> If risks related to national security, public safety, or fraud are determined for a specific population, a re-review of approved benefit requests for that population may be required.

<sup>7</sup> For benefit requests where an interview is not required (all of the requests previously listed apart from Form I-485), the case review and evaluation will determine if the alien needs to appear at a USCIS office for an in-person interview.

<sup>8</sup> See INA 212(a)(2)-(3) and 237(a)(2) and (4).

and require an analysis of the relevant information and facts. During this review, relevant policies, procedures, and operational guidance will be reviewed for compliance, accuracy, and needed improvements.

This guidance specifies which cases are subject to the adjudicative hold and outlines the factors to consider when assessing benefit eligibility during the review, interview, or re-interview of affected aliens. USCIS personnel are instructed to prioritize national security and public safety concerns and ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations during the adjudication process. All findings must be documented in accordance with established protocols to support any subsequent determinations or actions.

This memo does not supersede any other guidance regarding hold and review of applications by certain aliens.<sup>9</sup>

## **Background**

On January 20, 2025, the President issued Executive Order (EO) 14161, titled *Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorist and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*. This order aimed to safeguard U.S. citizens from aliens who may seek to commit terrorist acts, pose threats to national security, promote hateful ideologies, or exploit immigration laws for malicious purposes. EO 14161 underscores the importance of vigilance during the visa issuance process to ensure that individuals approved for admission into the United States do not intend to harm Americans or compromise U.S. national interests.

President Trump has consistently expressed his strong concerns that the DV Program does not serve the interests of the United States and that the program, as structured and implemented, does not result in the immigration of people who are well-disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States and fails to keep our country safe. President Trump has repeatedly urged Congress to end the program because of his concerns and to restructure our immigration system to better serve the country's needs.

The recent mass shooting at Brown University and the murder of a distinguished professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology allegedly committed by an alien admitted to the United States through this program again highlights the threat to our national security and public safety present in certain areas of our immigration system. This is just the latest incident, of course. As the Secretary noted in her statement, an alien admitted to the United States through the DV Program viciously attacked civilians in New York City in 2017 with a truck, killing eight people and injuring 13 others. The alien that committed that terrorist act was inspired by ISIS and is currently serving eight consecutive life sentences plus 260 years in prison. However, the alien should never have been in a position to commit such an attack. While we await further action from Congress to tighten our immigration system, it is critical that we take all steps within our authority to protect our national security and public safety.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, USCIS issued a similar hold memorandum on December 2, 2025. See Policy Memorandum, *Hold and Review of all Pending Asylum Applications and all USCIS Benefit Applications Filed by Aliens from High-Risk Countries*, issued on December 2, 2025 ([PM-602-0192](#)).

Accordingly, Secretary Noem has directed USCIS to pause its role in the DV Program to safeguard the national security and public safety of the United States and its citizens. Secretary Noem has found this action necessary to ensure that aliens who seek adjustment of status through this program pose no threat to Americans.

It is paramount that the U.S. government ensure aliens in the United States do not intend to threaten its citizens or undermine or destabilize its culture, government, institutions, or founding principles. Benefits will not be granted to aliens who advocate for, aid, or support designated foreign terrorists or other threats to our national security. Benefits will not be granted to aliens who are a threat to public safety. America's immigration system should serve and safeguard Americans' interest.

As a result of these considerations, the Secretary has directed USCIS to pause the final adjudication of adjustment of status, ancillary benefits, and waiver applications filed by aliens seeking lawful permanent resident status under the DV Program.

The applications filed by aliens associated with adjustment of status under the DV Program are:

- Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status (Form I-485);
- Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765) based on 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(9);
- Request for an Advance Parole Document filed using the Application for Travel Documents, Parole Documents, and Arrival/Departure Records (Form I-131);
- Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility (Form I-601);
- Application for Permission to Reapply for Admission into the United States After Deportation or Removal (Form I-212); and
- Application for Action on an Approved Application or Petition (Form I-824).

No other applications, petitions, or benefit requests are included in this hold.

This hold will remain in effect until lifted or modified by the USCIS Director, or at the direction of the Secretary, through a subsequent memorandum. Any requests to lift the hold due to litigation or other extraordinary circumstances must receive approval from the USCIS Director or Deputy Director.<sup>10</sup>

## **Guidance**

The Secretary has determined that there is a necessity to ensure that all aliens applying for adjustment of status under the DV Program in the United States do not pose a threat to national security or public safety. This effort ensures that USCIS exercises its full authority to investigate immigration benefit requests filed by aliens who may pose risks to the national security and public safety of the United States, as outlined in [DHS Delegation of Authority 0150.1](#), issued June 5, 2003.

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<sup>10</sup> Extraordinary circumstances may include applications filed by aliens whose adjustment of status or grant of an ancillary benefit or waiver would serve a U.S. national interest. Any request for an exemption to the adjudicative hold must be coordinated with the Office of Policy and Strategy.

USCIS will conduct a thorough review on a case-by-case basis to assess benefit eligibility, including whether:

1. The alien is listed in the Terrorist Screening Dataset (TSDS) as a Known or Suspected Terrorist (KST) under Tier 1 or Tier 2 classifications or is included in Tier 3 or Tier 4 of the TSDS with significant derogatory information related to the alien.
2. The alien is connected to prior, current, or planned involvement in, or association with, an activity, individual, or organization described in sections 212(a)(3)(A), (B), or (F), or 237(a)(4)(A) or (B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
3. The alien is linked to prior, current, or planned involvement in, or association with, an activity, individual, or organization that may pose a risk of serious harm or danger to the community, typically, though not exclusively, due to criminal conduct described in INA 101(a)(43), 212(a)(1)(A)(iii), 212(a)(2), 237(a)(2), or 237(a)(4)(A)(ii), or related classified information exists.
4. The alien is unable to establish his or her identity.<sup>11</sup>

Implementation of the Secretary's order will result in delay to the adjudication of some pending applications and DHS has weighed that consequence against the urgent need for the agency to ensure that applicants are vetted and screened to the maximum degree possible. Ultimately, DHS has determined that the burden of processing delays that will fall on some applicants is necessary and appropriate in this instance, when weighed against the agency's obligation to protect and preserve our national security and protect Americans from harm.

## Use

This policy memorandum is intended solely for the guidance of USCIS personnel in the performance of their official duties, but it does not remove their discretion in making adjudicatory decisions. It may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable under law or by any individual or other party in removal proceedings, in litigation with the United States, or in any other form or manner.

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<sup>11</sup> See USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 1, General Policies and Procedures, Part E, Adjudications, Chapter 8, Discretionary Analysis [[1 USCIS-PM E.8](#)].