

 Waste Action Alert

A publication of the RSC Sunset Caucus from co-chairs Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)
Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman

Eliminate the Visa Lottery Program

February 15, 2012

Program or Item Targeted: Visa Lottery Program

Cost of Program or Item: This bill would decrease direct spending by up to \$1.3 billion. ([CBO Estimate](#))

Background on Program or Item to Be Sunseted: The VISA lottery program awards legal permanent resident status to foreign nationals based on pure luck. The State Department conducts a random lottery to pick these individuals. Millions apply and approximately 50,000 foreign nationals are awarded green cards to enter the U.S. each year. Usually, immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals that have existing connections with family members lawfully residing in the United States or with U.S. employers. However, under the visa lottery program, green cards are awarded to immigrants at random without meeting such criteria.

Why This Program Is Wasteful: The visa lottery program is by its very nature discriminatory because it arbitrarily disqualifies natives from countries with higher immigration levels to the U.S., which excludes nationals from countries such as Haiti, the Philippines, Canada, the United Kingdom, India, and many others. Furthermore, the visa lottery program is wrought with fraud. It is common for foreign nationals to apply for the lottery program multiple times using many different aliases. The State Department's Office of Inspector General declared in its September 2003 report that the visa lottery program is "subject to widespread abuse" and that "identity fraud is endemic, and fraudulent documents are commonplace." The system created by this program is unfair to immigrants who comply with U.S. immigration laws.

What is more, the program makes it easier for terrorists to enter the United States. A perfect example of the system gone awry is the case of Hesham Mohamed Ali Hedayet, the Egyptian national who killed two and wounded three during a shooting spree at Los Angeles International Airport in July of 2002. He was allowed to apply for legal permanent resident status in 1997 because of his wife's status as a visa lottery winner. Even if technical improvements were made to the visa lottery program, nothing would prevent terrorist organizations or foreign intelligence agencies from having members apply for the program who do not have criminal backgrounds.

MEMBER ACTION ITEM: Rep. Bob Goodlatte has introduced H.R. 704, the SAFE for America Act. The visa lottery program represents what is wrong with our country's immigration system. It is wasteful, is a national security threat, and must be terminated. For more information, contact Branden Ritchie at Branden.Ritchie@mail.house.gov.

If you would like to participate in eliminating wasteful programs with the RSC Sunset Caucus, please e-mail Rick.Eberstadt@mail.house.gov.

Note: Not every item featured in the Waste Action Alerts is necessarily endorsed by the RSC. These Alerts highlight the individual initiatives of members of the RSC Sunset Caucus.

*"The RSC Sunset Caucus uncovers government waste and seeks to eliminate it,
working to sunset programs that taxpayers shouldn't be paying for."*

