

# President Proposes New Merit-Based Green Card System

May 20, 2019

On May 16, 2019, President Donald Trump outlined, in broad strokes, his [new immigration plan](#). The proposal delineates two primary goals: securing the U.S. border and protecting American workers. Most notably, the plan includes the introduction of a new “Build America” visa that would replace existing green card preference categories and limit family-based immigration in favor of a merit-based points system.



On May 16, 2019, President Donald Trump outlined, in broad strokes, his [new immigration plan](#). The proposal delineates two primary goals: securing the U.S. border and protecting American workers. Most notably, the plan includes the introduction of a new “Build America” visa that would replace existing green card preference categories and limit family-based immigration in favor of a merit-based points system. President Trump says that his plan will significantly increase the number of green cards awarded to highly skilled workers.

Exact details of the president's proposal are still unknown. News reports suggest that the White House is drafting a bill to be released at a later date. In the meantime, the following is a summary of the plan presented by the president.

The plan proposes to do the following:

- Prioritize the award of green cards to highly skilled workers through the use of a merit system. Points would be awarded to green card applicants based on the following considerations (note that this list may not be exhaustive):
  - Age: Younger candidates would earn more points because, according to the plan, they stand to contribute more to the U.S. social safety net.
  - Skill set: More points will be awarded for possessing a “valuable skill.”
  - Existence of a job offer
  - A plan to create jobs
  - Attainment of an advanced education
  - Higher wages: Higher-wage workers would receive more points.
  - Ability to demonstrate financial self-sufficiency
  - Proficiency in the English language
- Increase the total number of green cards awarded to highly skilled workers from 12 percent, under the current immigration system, to at least 57 percent
- Reduce family-based immigration (Family-based immigration is expected to be reduced from 66 percent of the total green cards issued to roughly 33 percent under the proposed plan. Notably, the plan would prioritize spouses and children.)
- Implement a civics test for all green card applicants

What the proposed plan **does not** do:

- The plan would not change the total number of green cards issued each year.
- The plan does not mention nonimmigrant visas (H-1B, H-2B, F-1, L-1, etc.).
- The plan does not address Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients or temporary protected status (TPS) beneficiaries.

The president's plan is just a proposal at this point and has no immediate effect on the current immigration processes.

Ogletree Deakins' Immigration Practice Group will continue to monitor developments with respect to the proposed changes to the immigration system and will post updates on our [immigration blog](#) as additional information becomes available.

TOPICS

Immigration