

Visa Bulletin, Cont'd....

Current: means no backlog exists at all and everyone in that category can immigrate, assuming all of the paperwork has been properly completed. When a category is current, it is noted in the Bulletin by the letter "C".

Unavailable: means no visas are available that month for the category. Therefore, no one who fits within that category can immigrate to the United States. When there are no numbers available, this is designated by the letter "U".

Cut-Off Date: by considering all of the factors explained earlier, the State Department tries to estimate how many people can be allowed to immigrate in a given month so that all the numbers available for that year will be used up by the end of the year. They do this by establishing cut-off dates. These dates are used by the Immigration Service and the State Department so they can issue visas to people who then become permanent residents of the United States that month.

Each person who is within one of the family or employment preferences is given a priority date. This is the date that a visa petition or labor certification was filed on the person's behalf. By keeping track of that date, it can be estimated by looking at the Visa Bulletin, how quickly a person will be able to immigrate to the United States.

When persons file visa petitions for family members, they usually want to know how soon their relatives will be able to immigrate to the United States. When employment based visas are filed, people want to know how long before they can immigrate. The best way to estimate the time it will take for a category to move to a particular date is to check the Visa Bulletin published by the State Department for a few months to see how fast the cut off dates are moving in a particular category. By looking at the cut off date and calculating the speed it is moving, it is possible to estimate how long it will take for their priority date to become current.

Unfortunately, the speed at which the cut-off dates move fluctuates, sometimes moving faster and other times moving slower. It is similar to taking a number at the meat market, finding out the person's number who is currently being served, and then estimating how long it will be before it is your turn. If there are three people in front of you, it does not mean that you will be served in three minutes. Some orders will take longer to fill, some shorter. But if you had watched for half an hour and saw that fifteen people were served, you could estimate that with three people ahead of you, and the butcher servicing one person every two minutes, you would have an approximate six-minute wait.

The State Department has a Visa Bulletin hotline. By calling (202) 663-1541, you can find out the availability of immigrant visa numbers during the specific month. Visa Bulletins may be ordered by requesting a Visa Bulletin subscription.

Visa Bulletins are also available at http://travel.state.gov/visa_bulletin.html.

Note: The information contained in this web site is intended to convey general information. It should not be construed as legal advice or opinion. It is not an offer to represent you, nor is it intended to create an attorney-client relationship. Any email sent via the Internet using email addresses listed in this web site would not be confidential and would not create an attorney-client relationship.