



News & Types: Immigration Monthly Updates

# Business Immigration Monthly - March 2026

3/24/2026

By: Julie T. Emerick, Anne C. Miller

Practices: Immigration

## UPDATE ON THE PROTECTING U.S. WORKERS INITIATIVE

The Department of Justice's (DOJ) Immigrant and Employee Rights (IER) section re-launched the *Protecting U.S. Workers Initiative*, which was originally introduced during the first Trump Administration.

The Protecting U.S. Workers Initiative targets, investigates, and brings enforcement actions against employers that intentionally discriminate against U.S. workers in favor of foreign workers, in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). As part of this initiative, DOJ has been proactively investigating employers for potential violations of the Form I-9 employment eligibility verification (EEV) process and for discriminatory hiring and recruitment practices.

### Recruitment and Job Advertising Risks

Employers face increased risk of IER investigations not only during hiring, but also during recruitment and job advertising. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) prohibits limiting positions to U.S. citizens unless required by law, regulation, executive order, or government contract. An employer, or its agents, may not state or imply any specific citizenship, immigration status, visa category or preference in a job posting - whether published directly or through a third party—unless a lawful citizenship requirement applies. Investigations may also arise if a job applicant is excluded from consideration based on citizenship or immigration status. IER has previously confirmed that employers may state in job postings that they will consider only candidates who are authorized to work in the United States without employer sponsorship, provided the statement is neutrally applied and does not otherwise exclude protected workers.

Because IER investigations can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, many matters are resolved through settlement. A settlement may require an employer to pay a civil penalty; to provide back-pay to affected workers; to revise its hiring policies, training materials and guidance on the Form I-9 process for review by IER; and to comply with monitoring and reporting obligations for a defined period.

### Recent DOJ Settlements

Tekshapers Inc., a Michigan-based IT recruitment and staffing company, was investigated following a charge and independent inquiry alleging citizenship-status discrimination in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1324b. IER found reasonable cause to believe that, through more than 25 job advertisements, the company restricted certain job

opportunities to specific visa holders and unlawfully excluded U.S. workers. Under the settlement, Tekshapers agreed to pay \$47,000 in civil penalties and \$18,000 in back pay to the charging party. The company also agreed to ensure all job postings and recruiting practices exclude unlawful citizenship-based preferences or restrictions, and it will refrain from citizenship-status discrimination in recruitment, hiring, firing, referrals, and Form I-9 practices. The settlement term is two years, during which IER may conduct compliance inquiries, inspect Forms I-9, and require quarterly compliance reports.

TekisHub Consulting Services, LLC, a Delaware company that provides IT recruitment and staffing services, was investigated following a charge the company restricted certain job opportunities based on citizenship status in recruiting emails and job postings, without legal justification in violation of 8 U.S.C. § 1324b. After independent inquiry, TekisHub agreed to pay \$200,000 in civil penalties. The company also agreed to eliminate unlawful citizenship-based preferences in recruitment and advertising, revise its employment and recruiting policies and have staff undergo compliance training. The settlement agreement is valid for three years and during this time IER may inspect the company's Forms I-9 and require quarterly compliance reporting.

H2A Complete II Inc., a Mississippi company, was investigated after allegations that it imposed unnecessary minimum experience requirements in job orders submitted to state workforce agencies to discourage or disqualify U.S. workers, while not uniformly applying those requirements to foreign workers seeking H-2A temporary agricultural positions. After independent inquiry, H2A Complete II agreed to pay \$25,000 in civil penalties; ensure its experience requirements and hiring criteria are business-justified, uniformly applied, and non-discriminatory. The settlement agreement is valid for two years and during this time DOJ may request documentation of compliance, interview employees and inspect the premises. On a semi-annual basis, H2A Complete II must report the number of U.S. workers who applied and were offered employment.

Epik Solutions d/b/a Epikso, a California-based technology recruitment and staffing company, was investigated following allegations it engaged in citizenship-status discrimination by restricting positions to certain citizens or visa categories, including H-1B Specialty Occupation Worker visa holders.

Under the settlement, Epik Solutions agreed to pay \$71,916 in civil penalties; refrain from discrimination based on citizenship status or national origin; revise its employment policies to prohibit unlawful discrimination based upon citizenship or national origin; and provide training to employees, recruiters, contractors and agents involved in hiring or Form I-9 compliance. The settlement term is for three years and during this time IER may conduct compliance inquiries and inspect the employer's Forms I-9.

These cases demonstrate that staffing companies, agricultural employers, and technology recruiters are all within IER's enforcement focus.

#### Form I-9 Compliance Reminder

IER investigations may also arise when employers request specific documents, challenge valid documents, or otherwise deviate from Form I-9 requirements. As part of the Form I-9 employment eligibility verification process, an employer may not request specific documents. A employer may only present the List of

Acceptable Documents, allowing the employee to choose which documents to present to document their identity and work authorization in the United States.

Please contact a Masuda Funai immigration attorney if your company has questions regarding I-9 compliance, recruiting practices, and/or if you would like to conduct a proactive Form I-9 audit or compliance review.

### **ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES ADDED TO THE VISA BOND PILOT PROGRAM**

Prior editions of the Masuda Funai Business Immigration Monthly reported that the U.S. government will collect a visa bond payment from B Visa applicants (Visitors) who are nationals from countries designated as “high overstay”; countries with deficient screening and vetting processes; or countries offering citizenship without a residency requirement, also known as Citizenship by Investment (“CBI Program”).

The administration recently expanded the number of countries subject to the Visa Bond Pilot Program. With the most recent expansion, nationals from 50 of the 195 U.N.-recognized countries, including four countries with teams scheduled to play in the FIFA World Cup 2026 later this year, are subject to the visa bond payment when applying for visa to travel to the United States for business or pleasure (B-1/B-2 visa). These nationalities include:

- Algeria – effective January 21, 2026
- Angola – effective January 21, 2026
- Antigua and Barbuda – effective January 21, 2026
- Bangladesh – effective January 21, 2026
- Benin – effective January 21, 2026
- Bhutan – effective January 1, 2026
- Botswana – effective January 1, 2026
- Burundi – effective January 21, 2026
- Cabo Verde – effective January 21, 2026
- Cambodia – effective April 2, 2026
- Central Africa Republic – effective January 1, 2026
- Cote D'Ivoire – effective January 21, 2026
- Cuba – effective January 21, 2026
- Djibouti – effective January 21, 2026
- Dominica – effective January 21, 2026
- Ethiopia – effective April 1, 2026
- Fiji - effective January 21, 2026
- Gabon – effective January 21, 2026
- The Gambia – effective October 11, 2025
- Georgia – effective April 2, 2026
- Grenada – effective April 2, 2026
- Guinea – effective January 1, 2026

- Guinea Bissau – effective January 1, 2026
- Kyrgyz Republic – effective January 21, 2026
- Lesotho – effective April 1, 2026
- Malawi – effective August 20, 2025
- Mauritania – effective October 23, 2025
- Mauritius – effective April 2, 2026
- Mongolia – effective April 2, 2026
- Mozambique – effective April 2, 2026
- Namibia – effective January 1, 2026
- Nepal – effective January 21, 2026
- Nicaragua – effective April 2, 2026
- Nigeria – effective January 21, 2026
- Papua New Guinea – effective April 2, 2026
- São Tomé and Príncipe – effective October 23, 2025
- Senegal – effective January 21, 2026
- Seychelles – effective April 2, 2026
- Tajikistan – effective January 21, 2026
- Tanzania – effective October 23, 2025
- Togo – effective January 21, 2026
- Tonga – effective January 21, 2026
- Tunisia – effective April 2, 2026
- Turkmenistan – effective January 1, 2026
- Tuvalu – January 21, 2026
- Uganda – effective January 21, 2026
- Vanuatu – effective January 21, 2026
- Venezuela – effective January 21, 2026
- Zambia – effective August 20, 2025
- Zimbabwe – effective January 21, 2026

Mali, which required a visa bond effective October 23, 2025, was removed from the list on

The bond amount to be collected is \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$15,000 per applicant. The bond payment is required by the applicant even if applying for the B visa in another country.

Once the bond has been posted and the B-1/B-2 visa issued, the traveler may arrive and depart the United States at any commercial airport or CBP preclearance location. The visa bond holder may not arrive in the United States via a charter air, general aviation, land or sea ports of entry.

Additionally, the B-1/B-2 visa will be limited to a single-entry and have a 3-month validity. Admission to the United States by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will be only for a maximum period of 30 days.

The opportunity to have the bond payment returned is forfeited when:

- The visa holder departs the United States after the date of their authorized stay in the United States.
- The visa holder remains in the United States beyond the date of their authorized stay in the United States. This can occur if USCIS denies the visa holder’s request for an extension of stay or change of immigration status.
- The visa holder applies to adjust out of nonimmigrant status, including claiming asylum or applying for Permanent Resident status.

**TRACKING VISA AND TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS**

Effective April 2, 2026, nationals from approximately 59% of the world will face challenges entering the United States based upon conditions or limitations on nonimmigrant and/or immigrant (Green Card) visa issuance and travel bans.

The chart below lists the countries affected. A lawful permanent resident (Green Card holder) who is a national of a listed country, is still eligible to travel to the United States. A person born in a listed country who holds a passport issued by a country not on this list may be eligible to apply for an immigrant or nonimmigrant visa and travel to the United States.

Country	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Immigrants	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Nonimmigrant Visa Holders	Effective Date for Travel Ban for B-1, B-2, F, M, J Visa Holders	Effective Date for Cessation of Immigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Cessation of Nonimmigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Visa Bond
Afghanistan	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Albania				01/26/2026***		
Algeria				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Angola			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Antigua and Barbuda			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Armenia				01/26/2026***		
Azerbaijan				01/26/2026***		
Bahamas				01/26/2026***		
Bangladesh				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Barbados				01/26/2026***		

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Belarus				01/26/2026***		
Belize				01/26/2026***		
Benin			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Bhutan				01/26/2026***		01/01/2026
Bosnia and Herzegovina				01/26/2026***		
Botswana						01/01/2026
Brazil				01/26/2026***		
Burma (Myanmar)	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Burkina Faso	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Burundi	06/09/2025*		06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Cambodia				01/26/2026***		
Cameroon				01/26/2026***		
Cape Verde (Republic of Cabo Verde),				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Central African Republic						01/01/2026
Chad	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Colombia				01/26/2026***		
Cote d'Ivoire			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026

Country	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Immigrants	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Nonimmigrant Visa Holders	Effective Date for Travel Ban for B-1, B-2, F, M, J Visa Holders	Effective Date for Cessation of Immigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Cessation of Nonimmigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Visa Bond
Cuba	06/09/2025*		06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Democratic Republic of the Congo				01/26/2026***		
Djibouti						01/21/2026
Dominica			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Egypt				01/26/2026***		
Equatorial Guinea	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Eritrea	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Ethiopia				01/26/2026***		
Fiji				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Gabon			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
The Gambia			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		10/11/2025
Georgia				01/26/2026***		
Ghana				01/26/2026***		
Grenada				01/26/2026***		
Guatemala				01/26/2026***		
Guinea				01/26/2026^^		01/01/2026
Guinea Bissau						01/01/2026
Haiti	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Iran	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	

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Iraq				01/26/2026***		
Jamaica				01/26/2026***		
Jordan				01/26/2026***		
Kazakhstan				01/26/2026***		
Kosovo				01/26/2026***		
Kuwait				01/26/2026***		
Kyrgyz Republic				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Laos	06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**	06/09/2025* to 01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Lebanon				01/26/2026***		
Liberia				01/26/2026***		
Libya	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Malawi			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		08/20/2025
Mali	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Mauritania			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		10/23/2025
Moldova				01/26/2026***		
Mongolia				01/26/2026***		
Montenegro				01/26/2026***		
Morocco				01/26/2026***		
Namibia						01/01/2026
Nepal				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026

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Nicaragua				01/26/2026***		
Niger	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Nigeria			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
North Macedonia				01/26/2026***		
Pakistan				01/26/2026***		
Palestine Authority	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Republic of the Congo	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Russia				01/26/2026***		
Rwanda				01/26/2026***		
Saint Kitts and Nevis				01/26/2026***		
Saint Lucia				01/26/2026***		
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines				01/26/2026***		
São Tomé and Príncipe						10/23/2025
Senegal			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Sierra Leone	06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**	06/09/2025* to 01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Somalia	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	

Country	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Immigrants	Effective Date for Travel Ban for all Nonimmigrant Visa Holders	Effective Date for Travel Ban for B-1, B-2, F, M, J Visa Holders	Effective Date for Cessation of Immigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Cessation of Nonimmigrant Visa Issuance	Effective Date for Visa Bond
South Sudan	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Sudan	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Syria	01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Tajikistan						01/21/2026
Tanzania			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		10/23/2025
Thailand				01/26/2026***		
Togo	06/09/2025*		06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Tonga			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		YES – 01/21/2026
Tunisia				01/26/2026***		
Turkmenistan	06/09/2025*		06/09/2025* to 01/01/2026** (now ended)	01/01/2026**		01/01/2026
Uganda				01/26/2026***		01/21/2026
Uruguay				01/26/2026***		
Uzbekistan				01/26/2026***		
Vanuatu						01/21/2026
Venezuela	06/09/2025*		06/09/2025*	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026
Yemen	06/09/2025*	06/09/2025*		01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**	
Zambia			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		08/20/2025
Zimbabwe			01/01/2026**	01/01/2026**		01/21/2026



- **Philippines:** Priority date before August 1, 2023 (*no change from March 2026*)

#### Who may **apply** for Adjustment of Status ("AOS") during April 2026?

On a positive note, USCIS has agreed to allow individuals eligible in the employment-based categories to apply for permanent resident status in the United States through a process called adjustment of status ("AOS") under the "Dates of Filing Chart" (instead of the Final Action Date chart, discussed above).

#### First Preference (EB-1)

- **All countries except China and India:** Current
- **China:** Priority date before December 1, 2023 (*no change from March 2026*)
- **India:** Priority date before December 1, 2023 (*no change from March 2026*)

#### Second Preference (EB-2)

- **All countries except China and India:** Current
- **China:** Priority date before January 1, 2022 (*no change from March 2026*)
- **India:** Priority date before January 15, 2015 (*advanced from August 15, 2014*)

#### Third Preference (EB-3)

- **All countries except China, India, and the Philippines:** Current. (*This represents a substantial advancement from March 2026, when the category was backlogged to January 15, 2024.*)
- **China:** Priority date before January 1, 2022 (*no change from March 2026*)
- **India:** Priority date before January 15, 2015 (*advanced from August 15, 2014*)
- **Philippines:** Priority date before January 1, 2024 (*no change from March 2026*)

#### Key Takeaways

- EB-2 Rest of World (excluding China and India) is now fully Current
- EB-3 Rest of World experienced one of the largest forward movements this month
- USCIS is allowing Dates for Filing, enabling many applicants to file earlier
- Applicants newly eligible should act promptly to prepare filings

For more detail on how priority dates work, please see our client advisory "Understanding When Your Priority Date is "Current" to File (and Be Approved) for a Green Card".

#### **SNAKES ON A PLANE? NOT AT THE LAREDO, TEXAS BORDER!**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported its officers intercepted 39 live pythons hidden inside a commercial tractor during an outbound inspection at the World Trade Bridge in Laredo, Texas, on March 5, 2026. The vehicle traveling from the United States to Mexico was selected for secondary inspection after the driver made a negative declaration for prohibited goods. During the inspection, officers discovered the snakes concealed inside the tractor.

The pythons were turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which safely transported them to a controlled environment. CBP issued \$34,824 in penalties for export violations and seized both the 2021

Peterbilt tractor and trailer. The case remains under investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Homeland Security Investigations.

CBP emphasized that exporting live reptiles requires strict compliance with U.S. and international regulations, including wildlife, agricultural, and foreign trade laws, and highlighted the seizure as an example of officers' efforts to protect both border security and the environment.

**BILLY BISHOP TORONTO CITY AIRPORT NOW OFFERING CBP PRE-CLEARANCE**

Effective March 10, 2026, Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport (YTZ) will offer U.S. Customers and Border Protection (CBP) preclearance. This will allow travelers to go through U.S. Immigration and Customs in Canada before departing and arriving in the U.S. The facility operates independently from Toronto Pearson Airport and will include expedited processing for NEXUS members, which is the Canadian equivalent to U.S. Global Entry.

The offering of CBP preclearance expands U.S. flight options outbound from Toronto and also expands processing for Canadian citizens seeking to enter the U.S. in TN or L-1 nonimmigrant status. Such applicants may now obtain an adjudication of their cases *before* flying to the U.S.

Billy Bishop is now the ninth Canadian airport with U.S. CBP preclearance, in addition to the below:

- Calgary International Airport (YYC)
- Edmonton International Airport (YEG)
- Halifax Stanfield International Airport (YHZ)
- Montréal–Trudeau International Airport (YUL)
- Ottawa Macdonald–Cartier International Airport (YOW)
- Toronto Pearson International Airport (YYZ)
- Vancouver International Airport (YVR)
- Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport (YWG)

**RULE AMENDING THE DIVERSITY VISA “GREEN CARD” PROGRAM**

Effective March 11, 2026, the Department of State (DOS) issued a final rule amending regulations for the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (DV Program) to strengthen integrity and reduce fraud. The DV Program offers a Green Card path to people from countries with historically low levels of immigration to the U.S. including Japan. Each year, up to 55,000 immigrant visas are allocated through a computerized random selection process in the DV Program.

The rule amending the DV Program requires applicants to provide valid, unexpired passport information and upload a scan of the passport's biographic and signature page when submitting an entry, unless the applicant qualifies for a limited exemption. Entries that do not include the required passport information will be automatically disqualified. The rule also standardizes regulatory language, including replacing “gender” with

“sex” and using “date of birth” instead of “age.” These language changes are intended to improve consistency and accuracy in data collection and applicant screening.

The primary purpose of the rule is to combat fraud in the DV program, including reported millions of duplicate or unauthorized entries, which are said to often be submitted by third parties without an applicant’s knowledge. The DOS asserts that requiring passport information will help verify applicant identity earlier in the process, reduce duplicate filings, and improve national security screening.

The rule will be implemented beginning with the DV-2027 program. The DV-2027 registration has been delayed pending the implementation of the new rule, and the DOS has yet to announce when registration will open.

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