



IMMIGRATION UPDATE - NOVEMBER 17, 2025

Posted on November 17, 2025 by Cyrus Mehta

Headlines:

[Shutdown Aftermath: Visa Services Resume, Delays Expected](#) – Routine visa services have resumed after the federal government shutdown was [ended](#) after a record 43 days. Federal funding has been extended until January 30, 2026, but delays and backlogs remain.

[DOS Expands Public Charge Exclusions, Encourages Visa Officers to Speculate](#) – The Department of State sent a cable to diplomatic and consular posts that greatly expands the public charge reasons for excluding visa applicants beyond the current requirements.

[Visa Bulletin for December Notes Extension of 'Certain Religious Workers' Category](#) – The Department of State's Visa Bulletin notes that a new bill signed on November 12, 2025, extends the EB-4 Certain Religious Workers (SR) category until January 30, 2026. No SR visas may be issued overseas, or final action taken on adjustment of status cases, after midnight January 29, 2026.

Details:

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Shutdown Aftermath: Visa Services Resume, Delays Expected

According to reports, routine visa services have resumed after the federal government shutdown [ended](#) on November 12, 2025, after a record 43 days. Federal funding has been extended until January 30, 2026, but delays and backlogs remain. Although [funding through fees](#) helped to continue some visa services during the shutdown, staff furloughs and layoffs have led to slowdowns, and coordination among agencies is also an issue. Documenting the reason for any delay is [recommended](#) for employers.

The Department of Labor (DOL) [announced](#) before the shutdown ended that the Office of Foreign Labor Certification (OFLC) [resumed processing on October 31, 2025](#), of employer requests for prevailing wages and labor certification determinations for temporary and permanent employment in the United States. OFLC's [Foreign Labor Application Gateway \(FLAG\)](#) system is now accessible, DOL said, as is OFLC's [SeasonalJobs.dol.gov](#) system, an online job registry of H-2A and H-2B temporary job opportunities. Processing and response times may be longer than normal, OFLC said.

The Executive Office for Immigration Review provides [updated operational status information](#) for each immigration court. For information about a particular case, check the [Automated Case Information System](#) online or at 800-898-7180 (TDD: 800-828-1120) or [call the immigration court](#) handling the case.

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DOS Expands Public Charge Exclusions, Encourages Visa Officers to Speculate

According to [reports](#), the Department of State sent a cable to diplomatic and consular posts that greatly expands the public charge reasons for excluding visa applicants beyond the current requirements of a medical exam, required vaccines, and screening procedures.

"Certain medical conditions—including, but not limited to, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, cancers, diabetes, metabolic diseases, neurological diseases, and mental health conditions—can require hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of care," the cable warns. It also includes obesity and age in the list of conditions visa officers should consider, along with the health of dependent family members and potential future scenarios. The cable encourages officers to speculate: "Does the applicant have adequate financial resources to cover the costs of such care over his entire expected lifespan without seeking public cash assistance or long-term institutionalization at government expense?"

[Reportedly](#), the new guidance primarily applies to immigrant visas, not nonimmigrants and short-term visitors.

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Visa Bulletin for December Notes Extension of 'Certain Religious Workers' Category

The Department of State's [Visa Bulletin for December 2025](#) includes the following update:

H.R. 5371, signed on November 12, 2025, extends the Employment Fourth Preference Certain Religious Workers (SR) category until January 30, 2026. No SR visas may be issued overseas, or final action taken on adjustment of status cases, after midnight January 29, 2026. Visas issued prior to that date will be valid only until January 29, 2026, and all individuals seeking admission in the non-minister special immigrant category must be admitted (repeat admitted) into the United States no later than midnight January 29, 2026.

As indicated in item D of the November 2025 Visa Bulletin, the extension resulted in this category immediately becoming available in November, subject to the same final action dates as the other Employment Fourth Preference categories per applicable foreign state of chargeability. For December, the applicable SR final action date will be 01SEP20 for all countries.

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