



IMMIGRATION UPDATE - DECEMBER 15, 2025

Posted on December 15, 2025 by Cyrus Mehta

Headlines:

[**Holiday Travel Alert: Visa Appointments Disrupted; Revocation Trends**](#) –

Recent developments affecting H-1B and H-4 travelers and visa holders, and others, this winter include visa appointment disruptions tied to expanded screening and an increase in visa revocation notices reportedly linked to prior arrest history.

[**USCIS Limits Age and Type of Photos for Many Applications**](#) – U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services announced new guidance, effective immediately, limiting the age of foreign nationals' photos that can be used to create immigration documents to a maximum of three years, with many exceptions. Certain forms will require a new photo, along with new biometrics, regardless of when an applicant's or petitioner's last photograph was taken.

[**DOS Updates Instructions for Nonimmigrant and Immigrant Visa**](#)

[**Applicants Scheduling Interviews**](#) – The Department of State announced that it has updated its instructions for all nonimmigrant and immigrant visa applicants scheduling visa interview appointments.

[**DHS Announces Termination of TPS Designation for Ethiopia**](#) – The

Department of Homeland Security is terminating the Temporary Protected Status designation for Ethiopia.

[**USCIS Posts New Form for 'Gold Card' Immigrant Petition; 'Platinum Card'**](#)

[**Coming Soon**](#) – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has posted a new form for the "Trump Gold Card" immigrant visa program. The program requires a minimum "contribution" of \$1 million along with a hefty fee. The Trump administration also announced a "Trump Platinum Card," coming soon, for which foreign nationals can join a waiting list.

[DHS Terminates Family Reunification Parole Programs](#) – The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is terminating all categorical family reunification parole programs for people from Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras, and their immediate family members. DHS said it "is returning parole to a case-by-case basis."

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Holiday Travel Alert: Visa Appointments Disrupted; Revocation Trends

The Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers (ABIL) is [alerting clients](#) about recent developments affecting H-1B and H-4 travelers and visa holders, and others, this winter: visa appointment disruptions tied to expanded screening and an increase in visa revocation notices reportedly linked to prior arrest history.

For example, attorneys have received reports that many H-1B and H-4 visa appointments scheduled in India for December 2025 have been canceled. Applicants are receiving notices that their appointments are being rescheduled for February and March 2026 instead. So far, these reports come from U.S. consulates in Hyderabad and Chennai; further cancellations and reschedulings are anticipated at other posts in India and elsewhere. Affected H-1B visa applicants and their dependents should anticipate rescheduling delays due to lengthy online presence checks and any potential security-related indicators and plan their future travel accordingly.

Attorneys also have received reports that the Department of State has initiated visa revocation actions for some H-1B visa holders based on prior arrest history, including arrests that occurred years ago (some reports reach back to 2017). Visa revocations do not necessarily impact lawful status in the United States but are a serious concern.

Visa holders in the United States may want to consider postponing international travel or delaying departure until the consulate has confirmed that a visa appointment has not been rescheduled. For case-specific guidance on travel planning, stamping strategy, rescheduling visa appointments, or responding to a revocation notice, contact your [ABIL attorney](#).

USCIS Limits Age and Type of Photos for Many Applications

On December 12, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [announced new guidance](#), effective immediately, limiting the age of foreign nationals' photos that can be used to create immigration documents to a maximum of three years, with many exceptions. Certain forms will require a new photo, along with new biometrics, "regardless of when an applicant's or petitioner's last photograph was taken," including applications to replace permanent resident cards and to register permanent residence or adjust status, and applications for naturalization and certificates of citizenship.

Additionally, USCIS said, "self-submitted photos will no longer be accepted. Only photos taken by USCIS or other authorized entities will be used." USCIS also said that it "has the discretion to require a new photograph from requestors in lieu of reusing an existing photograph."

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DOS Updates Instructions for Nonimmigrant and Immigrant Visa Applicants Scheduling Interviews

On December 12, 2025, the Department of State (DOS) announced that it has updated its instructions for all [nonimmigrant](#) and [immigrant](#) visa applicants scheduling visa interview appointments.

Nonimmigrant Visas

- Applicants for U.S. nonimmigrant visas should schedule their visa interview appointments at the [S. embassy or consulate](#) in their country of nationality or residence.
- Nationals of countries where the U.S. government is not conducting routine nonimmigrant visa operations must apply at the designated embassy or consulate, unless their residence is elsewhere.

Immigrant Visas

- Immigrant visa applicants must interview in the consular district designated for their place of residence or in their country of nationality if requested, with limited exceptions.
- Residents of countries where routine visa operations are suspended or paused should apply at their designated immigrant visa processing post,

unless the applicant is a national of another country with ongoing operations.

The announcements include a list of designated processing posts for applications.

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DHS Announces Termination of TPS Designation for Ethiopia

On December 12, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [announced](#) that it is terminating the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Ethiopia.

DHS said that Ethiopian nationals with no other lawful basis for remaining in the United States have 60 days to voluntarily depart the United States. After February 13, 2026, DHS "may arrest and deport any Ethiopian national without status after their TPS has been terminated." DHS said it encourages them to use U.S. Customs and Border Protection's [CBP Home Mobile App](#) to report their departure and "self-deport" from the United States. Use of the app "includes a complimentary plane ticket, a \$1,000 exit bonus, and potential future opportunities for legal immigration," DHS said.

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USCIS Posts New Form for 'Gold Card' Immigrant Petition; 'Platinum Card' Coming Soon

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has posted a new form for the "[Trump Gold Card](#)" immigrant visa program, [Form I-140G, Immigrant Petition for the Gold Card Program](#). The program requires a minimum "contribution" of \$1 million along with a hefty application fee. Applicants may only file the form after they have registered their information on trumpcard.gov and received confirmation that their submission was accepted. USCIS will contact the applicant when it is time to create or log in to their USCIS online account to file the form.

The form, dated 11/19/2025, was created under "[The Gold Card, Executive Order 14351](#)". The fee for Form I-140G is \$15,000 per person (principal beneficiary, spouse, or child(ren), as applicable). Additional Department of State (DOS) "small fees" [may apply](#) "depending on the applicant." For a corporation

or similar entity filing on behalf of an individual, the required "gift" to the United States is \$2 million for the principal beneficiary, and \$1 million per person for any accompanying spouse or children listed on the petition, in addition to the fee(s).

The Trump administration also announced a "[Trump Platinum Card](#)," coming soon, for which foreign nationals can join a waiting list. When launched, and upon receipt of a \$15,000 processing fee and a \$5 million contribution, applicants will have the ability to spend up to 270 days in the United States without being subject to U.S. taxes on non-U.S. income. Additional DOS "small fees" may apply "depending on the applicant." Those "who have ever been subject to U.S. tax on non-U.S. income (e.g., U.S. citizens and resident aliens) are not eligible to apply for the Trump Platinum Card."

It is unclear how long processing will take. The [website states](#), "Once an applicant's processing fee and application are received, the process should take weeks. The applicant will need to attend a visa interview and submit any additional documents in a timely manner." However, practitioners [expressed concerns](#) that it could take years in some cases.

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DHS Terminates Family Reunification Parole Programs

On December 12, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [announced](#) that it is [terminating](#) all categorical family reunification parole (FRP) programs for people from Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras, and their immediate family members. DHS said it "is returning parole to a case-by-case basis."

If a person was paroled in the United States under the FRP programs and their parole has not yet expired by January 14, 2026, it will terminate on that date unless the person has a pending application to register permanent residence or adjust status that was postmarked or electronically filed by December 15, 2025, and is still pending on January 14, 2026. If the person with parole has a pending Form I-485, the parole will remain valid until either the period of parole expires or DHS makes a final decision on their pending Form I-485, whichever is sooner. If DHS denies their Form I-485, "their period of parole will be terminated, and they should depart the United States immediately."

DHS said that when it terminates a person's period of parole under the FRP programs, it also will revoke their employment authorization based on that parole. The agency said it will notify each person individually that DHS is terminating their parole period and revoking their employment authorization.

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Firm in the News

Cyrus Mehta was quoted by the *Economic Times* in [A Million-Dollar Gold Card, Yet the Same Long Wait for Indians Eyeing American Shores](#). Commenting on the long waits people born in India will face if they apply for the Gold Card, he said, "If you are born in India, beware of Trump's Gold Card, as you will be stuck in the India EB-1 or EB-2 backlogs for years and even decades after you have shelled out \$1 million or more and won't see your green card for a very long time or never."

Mr. Mehta was quoted by the *Times of India* in [U.S. to Scan Social Media of all H-1B, H-4 Visa Applicants From December 15](#). Commenting on the new social media vetting policy for H-1Bs, he said, "The policy to punish H-1B holders who have been involved in censorship in the tech sector appears to be hypocritical. The Trump administration will deny a visa benefit if you (say as an executive in a social media company) have censored a person or viewpoint they favour – however politically incorrect, hurtful or obnoxious it may be. On the other hand, the Trump administration will have no compunctions to punish you if you have expressed views that they disfavor such as views perceived to be anti-Americanism even if it is protected under the First Amendment."

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