

AFGHAN IMMIGRATION OVERVIEW

Refugees

- Refugee or SIV status determined pre-arrival
- Pre-screened and vetted prior to arrival by the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) and USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services)
- Eligible for work authorization upon arrival
- Completed all required medicals pre-arrival
- Eligible for public benefits
- Eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) programming such as employment of English language services
- Clear pathway to citizenship—1 year Legal Permanent Resident application; 5 years—Citizenship

Afghan Placement & Assistance Program (APA)

- Humanitarian Parolee status upon arrival
- Employment and Social Security applications completed at military bases
 - Fort Pickett, VA from Sept. 5-Jan. 25
- Screened and vetted at the bases along with required medicals
- Eligible for work authorization upon arrival
- Temporary Protected Status for up to 2 years
- Eligible for public benefits
- Eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) programming such as employment of English language services
- Unclear pathway to permanency—apply for Special Immigrant Visa Status or asylum

***72,500** Afghans were admitted through parole*

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)

- Based on work for one year or more for the U.S. government or allied forces since 2001
- Multistep, multiagency process
 - Application to the State Department by submitting letters from a U.S.-citizen supervisor and relevant human resources department and a detailed description of threats experienced
 - Followed by two rounds of applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)—first for the SIV and then for a green card

Asylum

- Must demonstrate need for protection because of persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country based on one of 5 specified grounds: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.
- Applicants must submit evidence to corroborate their claims, including general evidence about conditions in their country and specific evidence about their individualized experiences or fear of persecution
- May NOT return to home country as an asylee

Afghan Adjustment Act

- The Presidential administration requested that Congress allow Afghan parolees with one year of U.S. residence to be able to adjust to permanent resident status, subject to vetting and other immigration requirements—Afghan Adjustment Act.
- Congress instead called on USCIS to expedite asylum processing for Afghans.
- Asylum and SIV processes are already severely backlogged.
 - As of October 2021, nearly 20,000 principal applicants (not counting their relatives) were in the SIV pipeline
 - USCIS has a backlog of more than 400,000 asylum cases
- The US used to do this before! (Hungarian Revolution, Vietnam War, Cuban Revolution, etc.)

What Can We Do?

Write and call our elected officials in Congress! Here's a template from World Relief that you can use or customize to your liking:

Optional Introduction: I am a member at First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem. Our congregation is co-sponsoring the resettlement of an Afghan family because our faith calls us to welcome the stranger. We have seen first hand how resilient they are, and we've heard about the unimaginable trauma and hardships they've already endured. They should not have to worry about their permanent immigration status. Even with our financial and relational support, securing the legal assistance needed to pursue applying for SIV status or asylum is an undue burden, especially given their support of the United States' military efforts in Afghanistan.

I am *calling/writing* to express my support for the Afghan Adjustment Act and ask that you support the bill as quickly as possible.

Over 70,000 Afghans were evacuated to the United States in the summer of 2021. These individuals included translators who helped U.S. troops, women rights activists, religious minorities, and others who were fleeing violence and persecution and were resettled in communities across the United States. Most of the Afghans who were evacuated were brought into the United States in a temporary immigration status typically granted for two years as "parolees."

Given the temporary nature of this relief, tens of thousands of the evacuated Afghans resettled in the U.S. will need to navigate complex legal issues to find more lasting protection in the U.S. We are advocating for the Afghan Adjustment Act so Afghans who were evacuated will be able to adjust status in the United States and be able to quickly integrate. The United States has historically done this for other populations including Cubans, Southeast Asians, and Iraqis.

Please support the Afghan Adjustment Act as soon as possible! Every day is important.

Rep. Susan Wild
Sen. Pat Toomey
Sen. Bob Casey

PA Office: 610-333-1170
PA Office: 610-434-1444
PA Office: 610-782-9470

DC Office: 202-225-6411
DC Office: 202-224-4254
DC Office: 202-224-6324