IMMIGRATION REFORM NEEDED: THERE IS NO LINE TO WAIT IN

There is no "line" to immigrate to the United States; pragmatic solutions are needed to create pathways for individuals to immigrate.

Immigration to the United States is based on selection or sponsorship by families, employers or the U.S. government. All of the processes are riddled with complicated rules and regulations and can take years, even decades. With the shutdown of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and the suspension of the ability to apply for asylum at the border, there is simply no line to wait in for those seeking protection against threats to their lives.

Many early immigrants, in the 1800s and early 1900s, came to the U.S. from Northern and Western Europe without having to apply or go through immigration processes. Historical laws permitted any white person of good character who had been in the U.S. for two years to apply for citizenship. However, the U.S. blocked Chinese immigrants in the 1880s as well as other groups at different points throughout U.S. history. Ad-hoc refugee resettlement was created in 1948 post-World War II; in the 1950s the U.S. admitted over 3 million "cold war" refugees. Refugee resettlement was formalized with the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980.

People who now want to come to the United States for many of the same reasons early immigrants came (religious freedom, fleeing war, seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families) no longer can come stand in a line or register to do so.

The U.S. needs immigration reform so that there are clear processes and pathways that uphold the American legacy of providing a safe haven for people seeking safety, respect U.S. legal obligations towards those individuals, and meet the labor needs of the country. There is currently a workforce shortage in Minnesota of 168,000 jobs and a shortage of 7.6 million nationally. In addition to re-starting the Refugee Admissions Program, a pragmatic solution would be to create a workforce program that gives immigrants work visas with the ability to adjust their status after a certain amount of time in the U.S. and pending background checks.

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