

Timeline of U.S. Policy on Immigration and Naturalization

(Extracted from The Flow of History - Gathering and Interactions of Peoples, Cultures, and Ideas.
http://www.flowofhistory.org/themes/movement_settlement/uspolicytimeline.php)

1790	Congress adopts uniform rules so that any free white person could apply for citizenship after two years of residency
1798	The <i>Alien and Sedition Acts</i> required 14 years of residency before citizenship and provided for the deportation of “dangerous” aliens. Changed to five-year residency in 1800
1819	First significant federal legislation on immigration. Includes reporting of immigration and rules for passengers from U.S. ports bound for Europe
1846	Irish of all classes emigrate to the United States as a result of the potato famine
1857	Dred Scott decision declared free Africans are non-citizens
1864	<i>Contract Labor Law</i> allowed recruiting of foreign labor
1868	African Americans gain citizenship with the 13 th Amendment
1875	<i>Henderson v. Mayor of New York</i> decision declared all state laws governing immigration are unconstitutional. Congress must regulate “foreign commerce.” Charity workers, burdened with helping immigrants, petition Congress to exercise authority and regulate immigration. Congress prohibits convicts and prostitutes from entering the country.
1880	The U.S. population is 50,155,783. More than 5.2 million immigrants enter the country between 1880 and 1890
1882	The <i>Chinese Exclusion Act</i> is passed – the first federal immigration law suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years and barred Chinese already in the U.S. from citizenship. The law also barred convicts, lunatics, and others unable to care for themselves from entering the country. A Head Tax was placed on all immigrants
1885	A second <i>Contract Labor Law</i> is passed making it unlawful to import unskilled aliens from overseas as laborers. Regulations did not pertain to those crossing land borders.
1888	For the first time since 1798, provisions are adopted for the expulsion of aliens
1889	Jane Addams founds Hull House on Chicago’s Near West Side
1890	Foreign-born people in the U.S. were 15% of the population (14% lived in Vermont). More immigrants were arriving from southern and eastern Europe (“new immigrants”) than northern and western Europe (“old immigrants”). Jacob Riis publishes “ How the Other Half Lives. ”
1891	The Bureau of Immigration is established under the Treasury Department. More classes of aliens are restricted including those who were monetarily assisted by others for their passage. Steamship companies were ordered to return ineligible immigrants to their countries of origin
1892	Ellis Island opens. Officials reported that women traveling alone must be met by a man, or they would be immediately deported

1902	The <i>Chinese Exclusion Act</i> is renewed indefinitely
1903	Anarchists, epileptics, polygamists, and beggars ruled inadmissible
1905	Construction of Angel Island Immigration Station in California begins. Becomes known as “ China Cove. ” It is surrounded by controversy. Finally put into action in 1910. It was billed as the “Ellis Island of the West”, within the Immigration Service it was known as “ The Guardian of the Western Gate. ” It was originally designed to control the flow of Chinese into the country, who were officially not welcome with the passage of the <i>Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882</i>
1906	Procedural safeguards enacted for naturalization. Knowledge of English becomes a basic requirement for immigrants
1907	The <i>Head Tax</i> is raised. People with physical or mental defects, tuberculosis, and unaccompanied children are added to the exclusion list. Japan agrees to limit emigrants to the U.S. in return for the elimination of segregating Japanese students in San Francisco schools.
1910	The Dillingham Report from Congress assumed inferiority of “new immigrants” from southern and eastern Europe and suggested a literacy test to restrict their entry. [William P. Dillingham was a Senator from Vermont].
1917	The <i>Immigration Act</i> provided for literacy tests for those over 16 and established an “ Asiatic Barred Zone, ” which barred all immigrants from Asia
1921	The <i>Quota Act of 1921</i> limited immigrants to 3% of each nationality present in the U.S. in 1910. This cut southern and eastern European immigrants to less than ¼ of those in the U.S. before World War I. Asians were still barred; no limits were put on people from the western hemisphere. A Non-quota category was established: wives, children of citizens, learned professionals, and domestic servants were not counted in the quotas.
1922	Japanese were made ineligible for citizenship
1924	Quotas were changed to 2% of each nationality based on numbers of those already in the U.S. in 1890. It was based on surnames (many anglicized at Ellis Island) and not on the census figures, 82% of immigrants allowed in the country came from western and northern Europe, 16% from southern and eastern Europe, 2% from the rest of the world. As no distinctions were made between refugees and immigrants, this would limit Jewish émigrés during the 1930s and 1940s. Despite protests from many native people, Native Americans were made citizens of the United States. The Border Patrol was established.
1929	The annual quotas of the 1924 Act are made permanent
1940	Provided for finger printing and registering of all aliens
1943	In the name of unity among the Allies, the Chinese Exclusion laws were repealed , and China’s quota <i>was set at a token 105 immigrants annually.</i> The basis for the Bracero Program was established with the importation of agricultural workers from North, South, and Central America

1946	Procedures adopted to facilitate immigration of foreign-born wives, fiancées, husbands, and children of U.S. armed forces personnel
1948	The <i>Displaced Persons Act</i> allowed 205,000 refugees over a two-year period. It gave priority to Baltic States refugees who were admitted as quota immigrants. Technical provisions <u>discriminated against Catholics and Jews</u> (those were dropped in 1953, and 205,000 refugees were accepted as non-quota immigrants)
1950	The grounds for exclusion and deportation are expanded. All aliens required to report their addresses annually
1952	The <i>Immigration and Nationality Act</i> eliminated race as a bar to immigration or citizenship. Japan's quota set at 185 annually. China stayed at 105; other Asian countries were given 100 a piece. Northern and western Europe's quota was placed at 85% of all immigrants. Tighter restrictions were placed on immigrants coming from British colonies in order to stem the tide of black West Indians entering Britain's generous quota. The Non-Quota class was enlarged to include husbands of American women.
1953	The 1948 refugee law was expanded to admit 200,000 above the existing limit
1965	The <i>Hart-Celler Act</i> abolished national origins quotas, established separate ceilings for the eastern (170,000) and western (120,000) hemispheres. Categories for preference were now based on family ties, critical skills, artistic excellence, and refugee status.
1978	The separate ceilings for Western and Eastern hemispheric immigration now became combined into a worldwide limit of 290,000
1980	The <i>Refugee Act</i> removes refugees as a preference category; it also reduces the worldwide ceiling for immigration to 270,000
1986	The <i>Immigration Reform and Control Act</i> provided for amnesty for many illegal aliens and sanctions for employers hiring illegals
1989	A bill gives permanent status to non-immigrant registered nurses who have lived in the U.S. for at least three years and met established certification standards
1990	The <i>Immigration Act of 1990</i> limits unskilled workers to 10,000/year; skilled labor requirements and immediate family reunification becomes the major goal. Continues to promote nuclear-family model. Foreign-born in the U.S. is now 7%
2001	<i>USA Patriot Act</i> amends the Immigration and Nationality Act. Broadens the scope of aliens ineligible for admission or deportable due to terrorist activities to include an alien who:- 1. is a representative of a political or social or similar group whose political endorsement of terrorists acts undermines U.S. anti-terrorist efforts 2. has used a position of prominence to endorse terrorist activity in a way that undermines U.S. antiterrorist efforts (or the child or spouse of such an alien under specified circumstances 3. has been associated with a terrorist organization and intends to engage in threatening activities while in the United States