

What undocumented people will have to do to get citizenship through comprehensive immigration reform

The newspaper [USA Today](#), reported yesterday that they reviewed a draft immigration bill from the White House. They report that the President intends to create a “Lawful Prospective Resident” visa. The bill includes spouse and children (even living abroad) to benefit if legal status is obtained. The Bill will only be introduced if a suitable bill is not presented to Congress in a reasonable amount of time.

USA Today reports the following on this issue:

“According to the White House draft, people would need to pass a criminal background check, submit biometric information and pay fees to qualify for the new visa. If approved, they would be allowed to legally reside in the U.S. for four years, work and leave the country for short periods of time. After the four years, they could then reapply for an extension.

Illegal immigrants would be disqualified from the program if they were convicted of a crime that led to a prison term of at least one year, three or more different crimes that resulted in a total of 90 days in jail, or if they committed any offense abroad that “if committed in the United States would render the alien inadmissible or removable from the United States.”

People currently in federal custody or facing deportation proceedings also could be allowed to apply for the Lawful Prospective Immigrant visa. Application forms and instructions would be provided in “the most common languages spoken by persons in the United States,” but the application and all supporting evidence submitted to the federal government would have to be in English.

They would also be given a new identification card to show as proof of their legal status in the country.

The immigrants could then apply for legal permanent residence, commonly known as a green card, within eight years if they learn English and “the history and government of the United States” and pay back taxes. That would then clear the path for them to apply for U.S. citizenship.”

While the eligibility criteria when it comes to criminal convictions may seem stringent (90 days or more in prison would be grounds for disqualification), the general principles are not too different from current immigration laws. The President emphasized the need for backgrounds checks etc. in his recent [inauguration speech](#), [speech in Las Vegas](#), in his [State of the Union speech](#), and in the [White House immigration fact sheet](#).

I want to inform prospective undocumented immigrants as well as anyone who is unfamiliar with the immigration system, that these guidelines already exist. Anyone who applies for a ‘green card’ or legal permanent residency, must already “*pass a criminal background check, submit*



biometric information and pay fees". Background checks at present have no backlogs and to the FBI's credit, appear seamless. A few years ago these background checks would take several months to clear, which added to lengthy processing times. So, background checks are not new and are nothing to be afraid of.

Similarly, to gain citizenship, people must already "*learn English and "the history and government of the United States" and pay back taxes*". Here is [my story of gaining citizenship](#) that describes the process a little. So, anyone unfamiliar with the process or anyone who has misapprehensions about the process, as well as any prospective citizens should know that these guidelines currently exist. We all had to go through the process and again, there is nothing to be afraid of.

In sum, I think this bill, as reported, is reasonable and I would support it. As more information becomes available, I will be sure to share my thoughts!

Originally posted on the [Watson Immigration Law Blog](#).

Tahmina Watson is an immigration attorney and founder of Watson Immigration Law in Seattle Washington. She was a practicing barrister in London, UK, before immigrating to the United States herself. While her practice includes family-based and employment-based immigration, she has a strong focus on immigrant entrepreneurs and start-up companies. She can be contacted at tahmina@watsonimmigrationlaw.com. You can visit www.watsonimmigrationlaw.com to learn about Tahmina and her practice.

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