

Changing Sentiment Not Necessarily a Measure of an Inhospitable U.S. Immigration Environment

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A recent change to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services mission statement is the latest in a series of actions taken under the new U.S. Presidential administration signaling a tilt away from America's historic recognition of the importance of immigrants in American progress. The new statement, which removed a passage that described the U.S. as a "nation of immigrants," now includes phrases such as "protecting Americans," "securing the homeland," and "safeguarding [America's] integrity." For those looking for a heartbeat in the body of history that has been America's immigrant past over the last several centuries, you might be tempted to put down the stethoscope and check the clock for time of death.

However, while the various branches of the U.S. government continue to prove unable to agree on a plan for immigration reform, America's current system for granting immigration benefits remains broadly intact and relatively unscathed. Case adjudications certainly are not getting any easier, and careful planning and strategy must be employed to obtain a successful outcome. But despite the fear mongering, America remains fundamentally open to legal immigration, and the departments of State and Homeland Security continue to grant benefits to foreign nationals from all over the world.

For example, in 2017, the Department of State (DOS) visa office reported granting more than 9.6 million nonimmigrant visas and nearly 576,000 immigrant visas globally. That's over 44,000 more immigrant visas than were issued during 2015; only about 50,000 fewer immigrant visas than were issued in 2016; and about 700,000 fewer nonimmigrant visas than were issued in 2016. To put things in perspective, in 2007—a decade ago, when immigration was not nearly the hot-button issue it has become today in the media—the DOS visa office issued 141,490 fewer immigrant visas than it did in 2017, and more than 3.2 million fewer nonimmigrant visas than it did in 2017.

America still offers a wealth of opportunities to businesses and individuals wishing to avail themselves of them. If you want to look into your legal options for visiting, living or working in the U.S., please reach out to one of our attorneys in our firm's Immigration Practice Group.

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