

NATIONAL REVIEW

Americans Actually Want Something Like the Cotton-Perdue Immigration Bill

By Sapna Rampersaud — August 10, 2017

A recent poll conducted by Morning Consult and *Politico* found that most Americans support the most important provisions of the Cotton-Perdue immigration bill, known as the RAISE Act.

The RAISE Act, in addition to amending several provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, essentially provides for four things: (1) It establishes a merit-based points system for employment visas; (2) it ends extended-family chain migration; (3) it limits the number of admitted refugees; and (4) it eliminates the Diversity Visa program.

First, the points-based system rewards aliens with admission to the United States based on how likely they are to succeed in and contribute to the country. The criteria for points include education level, English-language skills, job offers, and age. In other words, aliens who are younger, more educated, able to speak English, and have prospects for greater employment opportunities have an advantage. According to the Morning Consult/*Politico* poll (which accounts for those who support, don't support, or don't know/have no opinion), Americans support the notion that education (57 percent), professional and/or academic achievement (54 percent), English-language skills (62 percent), and the need for government assistance (54 percent) should be factors in the immigration and visa-distribution process. Only 24 percent, however, think that age should be a factor.

Second, the bill would limit family-sponsored immigration to spouses and non-adult children of citizens and legal residents (parents, siblings, and adult children would no longer be eligible). The poll indicates that 56 percent of Americans think that job skills are more important than family ties in considering who to admit. A plurality of respondents (45 percent) supported ending the ability to sponsor extended family members for green cards.

Third, the bill limits the number of refugees who may be admitted to 50,000 per fiscal year

(110,000 refugees was the goal the Obama administration set for 2017). Fifty-nine percent of respondents in the poll agreed that the U.S. should limit the number of refugees.

Fourth, the bill eliminates the Diversity Visa program, dubbed the green-card lottery. This lottery, established through the Immigration Act of 1990 and administered by the Department of State, provides 50,000 immigrant visas to applicants from countries with low immigration rates to the U.S. in order to diversify the American population of immigrants. The only requirements that exist, in addition to general requirements such as having a means of support and no criminal history, are that applicants must be born in an eligible country (some of which include Kenya, Fiji, Bahrain, and Guyana) and must have “at least a high school education or its equivalent, or . . . within five years of the date of application for a visa . . . at least 2 years of work experience in an occupation which requires at least 2 years of training or experience.” The poll found that a plurality (45 percent) of respondents support getting rid of this program.

A strong majority of Americans (67 percent) believe that passing an immigration-reform bill should be a national priority, and 44 percent of respondents indicated their support for the passage of the RAISE Act, while 31 percent opposed it and 24 percent didn’t know. The immigration bill put forward by Senators Tom Cotton (R., Ark.) and David Perdue (R., Ga.), while portrayed in the media as advancing a racist and alt-right agenda, is simply in line with what most Americans want.