

A Timeline of Parole Under Immigration Law

In 1952, the Immigration and Nationality Act became law. Among other things, the legislation formalized the executive branch's authority to temporarily allow noncitizens to enter the United States for humanitarian reasons or in the public interest.

Since then, both Republican and Democratic administrations have relied on parole to allow immigrants from Asia, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere to temporarily enter the U.S. and receive work permits.

While Congress has amended the parole statute since it was first enacted, its fundamental purpose remains the same; it is a crucial tool for providing immigration relief to people on humanitarian and public interest grounds.

In recent years, however, the use of parole has been eclipsed by an intense political debate over immigration policy. As a result, parole's purpose has been misconstrued, and its consistent use over the last 72 years ignored.

Below is a brief history of congressional authorization for parole and how different administrations have employed immigration parole over seven decades:

1952: As part of the Immigration and Nationality Act, Congress enacts Section 212(d)(5), which provides the Attorney General may exercise discretion to parole individuals into the United States for "emergent reasons or for reasons deemed strictly in the public interest."

1956: President Dwight Eisenhower's administration paroles more than 30,000 Hungarian refugees into the United States following the uprising in that country. Two years later, Congress moves to allow Hungarians granted parole to become eligible for permanent residency.

1959-1965: The Eisenhower and Johnson administrations grant parole to Cubans after Fidel Castro takes power, including to those who initially entered the United States without authorization. Congress subsequently creates a path to legal residency for those paroled into the United States through the Cuban Adjustment Act in 1966.

1962: The Kennedy administration grants parole to 15,000 Chinese immigrants through what is known as the Hong Kong Parole Program.

1980: Through the Refugee Act, Congress establishes an independent system for admitting refugees to the United States and restricts the ability of the Executive to use of parole to admit refugees, but otherwise preserves the parole authority.

1988: The Reagan administration creates a parole program for immigrants from the Soviet Union after they are denied refugee status.

1996: Through the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), Congress amends the parole statute to specify that it may only be used on a "case-by-case" basis, and it replaces "emergent reasons or for reasons deemed strictly in

the public interest” with today’s “urgent humanitarian reasons” and “significant public benefit” criteria. Congress declined to impose other limits—numerical or otherwise—on the parole statute.

2006: The Bush Administration establishes the Cuban Medical Professionals Parole program, which allows Cuban doctors and other medical professionals to request parole to enter the U.S.

2007: The Clinton administration creates the Cuba Family Reunification Parole program to enable family reunification faster than visas would become available.

2014: The Obama administration establishes the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program, which enables family reunification in the U.S. faster than visas become available.

2017: The Obama administration creates the International Entrepreneur Parole Program, allowing businesspeople of startup companies to enter the U.S. for up to 30 months with possible extensions.

2021: The Biden administration establishes Operation Allies Welcome, under which DHS paroled nearly 76,000 Afghan nationals into the United States in less than one year.

2022: The Biden administration creates Uniting for Ukraine (U4U), a parole program for Ukrainians and their immediate family members displaced by the war with Russia. By the end of 2023, more than 176,000 Ukrainians receive parole under the program.

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2022: The Biden administration creates a parole program for Venezuelans with U.S. sponsors. The program is similar to the one created for Ukrainians but has additional limitations, including a cap of 24,000 approvals per month.

2023: The Biden administration expands the Venezuela parole program and additionally establishes parole processes for Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans with U.S. sponsors (collectively known as the “CHNV parole program”). The CHNV parole program is capped at 30,000 approvals per month (for all four countries combined).

2024: The Biden administration announces that there will be no re-parole process for CHNV parole program beneficiaries despite having created streamlined re-parole processes for beneficiaries of Operation Allies Welcome and U4U.

***Links to additional information, including a comprehensive history of parole:**

[126 Parole Orders over 7 Decades: A Historical Review of Immigration Parole Orders](#)

[The Biden Administration’s Use of Immigration Parole Authority Is a Smart and Lawful Approach to Today’s Migration Challenges - Center for American Progress](#)