

## GREEN CARD LOTTERY RESULTS – HOW CAN YOU APPLY FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCE?

The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, commonly known as the green card lottery, has been existence since the 1990s. Its goal is to promote a new class of immigrants known as "diversity immigrants" (DV immigrants). The law makes available 50,000 permanent resident visas annually to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

The annual green card lottery program makes permanent residence visas available to persons meeting the simple, but strict, eligibility requirements. Applicants for the green card lottery are chosen by a computer-generated random lottery drawing. The visas, however, are distributed among six geographic regions with a greater number of visas going to regions with lower rates of immigration.

Unfortunately, the visa numbers for family members of a lottery winner (i.e. spouse and minor children of a lottery winner) come from the aggregate amount of 50,000 visas. This means that less than 50,000 lottery winners will actually receive green cards. Another problem factor is that the government usually selects more than 50,000 lottery winners because it believes that many people will not apply for permanent residence because: 1. they are no longer interested, 2. they already became permanent residents, or 3. the letter may be lost in the mail.

This means that a lottery winner has a run a race against time. The Immigration Service will adjudicate cases on a first come, first serve basis, which means that lottery applicants must file for permanent residence as soon as they can (October 1, 2006).

The selection process of the green card lottery for the year 2006/2007 has ended, and lottery winners are now receiving a letter from the US government stating they have been selected to apply for permanent residence. The notification process began in May 2006 and will end in August 2006. It is important to know that persons not selected will not receive any notification. Also, there is not a list of lottery winners that people can refer to in order to find out if they were selected.

After being selected in the random process, in order to actually receive a green card, lottery applicants selected in the random drawing must meet the eligibility requirements under U.S. law. The law requires that every lottery applicant must have at least a high school education or its equivalent or, within the past five years, have two years of work experience in an occupation requiring at least two years training or experience. The schooling or work experience must be shown at the time the lottery winner applies for permanent residence.

Lottery winners who are physically present in the United States may apply for a green card in the US, provided they are otherwise eligible to adjust status under the terms of the law. Some illegal aliens may also apply depending on their circumstances. Other

individuals who qualify for the benefits of the green card lottery program may apply for a green card at the nearest US Embassy or Consulate in the country they were born.

Green card lottery winners must ensure that Immigration Service or the US Consulate or Embassy abroad can complete action on their cases, including processing the visas of the family members before September 30, 2007, since on that date the green card lottery program will expire. After that date, no visa numbers for the green card lottery program will be available under any circumstances.

There are some countries that are ineligible for the green card lottery program. In Latin American those countries are: Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti and Jamaica. There is, however, a way for nationals of those countries to obtain permanent residence by virtue of the lottery program under two circumstances: 1. using the nationality of their spouse, if the spouse was born in a country that is eligible for the lottery, or 2. use the parents' nationality if: a. Parents were born in a country that is eligible for the lottery; and b. Parents did not live in the country where the child was born.

If you were selected a lottery winner, congratulations. You must make arrangements to begin the preparation of the case right away. Remember that more than 50,000 people were selected and the visas given to family members are given from the aggregate amount of 50,000 visas. Once the 50,000 visas are gone, the program will be finished and those whose cases were not approved, will not receive permanent residence.