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# Government Data Reveal 5.5 Million New Work Permits Issued Since 2009

By Jessica M. Vaughan

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**G**overnment data reveal that more than 5.5 million new work permits were issued to aliens from 2009 to 2014, above and beyond the number of new green card and temporary worker admissions in those years. This is a huge parallel immigrant work authorization system outside the limits set by Congress that inevitably impacts opportunities for U.S. workers, damages the integrity of the immigration system, and encourages illegal immigration.

Approximately 1.8 million new work permits were issued to aliens with temporary visas or those who entered under the Visa Waiver Program. Of these, about 1.2 million (67 percent) had a visa status for which employment is not authorized by law. For example, more than 470,000 work permits were issued to aliens on tourist visas and 532,000 were issued to foreign students. More than 156,000 were issued to dependents of students and guestworkers, all in categories not authorized for employment by law.

In addition, 963,000 new work permits were issued to aliens who have been granted permanent status or have a status that will lead to a green card. These are primarily refugees (418,000), fiancés of U.S. citizens (164,000), and approved asylum applicants (174,000).

About 982,000 new work permits were issued in this time period to illegal aliens or aliens unqualified for admission. Of these, 957,000 were aliens who crossed the border illegally (Entered Without Inspection). Inexplicably, 1,200 new work permits were issued to aliens who were denied asylum, were suspected of using fraudulent documents, were stowaways, or were refused at a port of entry.

A huge number of work permits, 1.7 million, were issued to aliens whose status was unknown, not recorded by the adjudicator, or not disclosed by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the agency that processes the applications. This should be a concern; work permits are gateway documents to driver's licenses and other benefits, and if the government agency issuing them does not know or will not disclose how the bearer arrived in the country how can others rely on the authenticity of an individual's identity? It is equally disconcerting if the government does know and chooses not to disclose it.

These statistics were obtained from USCIS in a Freedom of Information Act request. Status classifications are based on information from the application that is entered into USCIS databases. The agency chose to provide the data according to classifications that prevent computing the number of deferred action-based applications, illegal aliens who are in deportation proceedings, asylum applicants whose cases are pending, or aliens whose green card applications are not yet approved. It is likely that these case types are found in the categories of "EWI" and "Unknown/Not Reported". The figures reported here include only new work permits, not counting renewal or replacement cards issued.

These statistics indicate that the executive branch is operating a huge parallel immigrant work authorization system outside the bounds of the laws and limits written by Congress. It inevitably reduces job opportunities for Americans. In addition, allowing work permits to be issued to illegal aliens and temporary visitors damages the integrity of the legal immigration system and encourages illegal immigration. Congress has an opportunity this week to prevent the issuance of the next five million work permits if it votes to withhold funds for USCIS to implement President Obama's executive action plans.

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**Table 1. EADs, 2009-2014, Summary by Class**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
<b>Temporary Categories</b>							
Diplomats/employees	1,845	1,816	1,968	1,934	2,197	2,364	12,124
Business Visitor (includes domestics)	10,597	11,237	8,562	8,287	8,240	8,992	55,915
Tourist*	54,495	58,662	57,187	72,425	100,261	126,998	470,028
Bering Strait Entry*	9	8	4	7	1	12	41
Transit Status*	596	719	607	644	717	662	3,945
Crew*	67	63	60	59	62	89	400
Treaty Traders/Investors/Workers	4,735	5,041	5,085	5,811	7,469	7,541	35,682
Students*	68,220	68,891	72,129	78,396	96,683	147,373	531,692
Dependents of Students*	2,501	2,710	2,648	3,273	3,498	3,667	18,297
International Organization Staff	1,837	1,956	2,099	1,939	2,077	2,242	12,150
Temporary Worker (H)	22,178	25,833	27,683	57,110	34,658	40,183	207,645
Dependents of Temporary Workers*	9,271	11,382	13,492	31,268	19,279	21,972	106,664
Foreign Journalists	98	110	98	89	149	127	671
Exchange Students and Workers	8,294	8,931	8,891	9,321	9,582	10,970	55,986
Dependents of Exchange Students/Workers*	4,762	4,601	4,849	5,190	5,748	6,290	31,440
Intracompany Transferees and Family	21,529	21,317	23,713	27,875	29,477	34,812	158,723
Vocational Students*	279	325	303	369	435	584	2,295
NATO Staff and Families	243	161	98	110	95	169	876
Workers of Extraordinary Ability	1,459	1,543	1,433	1,604	1,887	2,087	10,013
Extraordinary Workers Family*	736	676	517	617	704	876	4,126
Artists and Entertainers	843	967	911	1,021	1,047	1,084	5,873
Family of Artists and Entertainers*	108	147	116	174	247	176	968
Cultural Exchange Workers	144	126	112	114	99	117	712
Religious Workers	5,601	4,126	2,578	2,976	2,621	2,548	20,450
Witnesses and Informants	11	4	14	14	9	6	58
Trafficking Victims and Families	208	236	468	539	668	887	3,006
Trade Agreement Workers	297	319	315	359	281	333	1,904
Trade Agreement Worker Families*	274	313	343	527	550	670	2,677
Visa Waiver*	4,258	4,327	4,194	4,605	5,928	5,964	29,266
<b>Permanent or Pre-Permanent Categories</b>							
Battered Spouse or Child	220	185	70	151	135	322	1,083
Approved Asylum	31,479	34,462	23,966	28,760	28,779	26,863	174,309
Special or Replacement Agricultural Workers	7	14	51	35	17	25	149
Employment Immigrant	5	3	3	11	2	12	36
Other Immigrant	175	293	300	726	1,057	369	2,920
Refugees	75,836	76,481	59,806	60,505	72,736	72,316	417,680
Crime Victims and Families	55	348	873	1,027	1,672	2,514	6,489
Family Green Card Waiting List (V)	1,211	1,055	795	646	618	440	4,765
Fiances (K)	29,111	30,299	23,516	25,227	22,873	32,926	163,952
Family Unity Program	15	11	24	21	24	18	113
Permanent Resident	24,068	24,989	27,757	30,536	40,762	43,833	191,945
<b>Illegal or Ineligible Aliens*</b>							
Parolees	3,162	3,652	3,175	4,155	4,589	4,482	23,215
Entered Without Inspection	68,374	87,094	86,944	182,097	374,517	158,194	957,220
Denied Asylum	10	6	5	8	3	4	36
Suspected Document Fraud	1	3	3	18	19	5	49
Stowaway	64	334	103	162	277	59	999
Withdrew Application for Admission	18	7	16	26	32	17	116
<b>Special Categories</b>							
Northern Marianas	-	1	3	23	31	87	145
Federated States of Micronesia	15	10	25	21	28	11	110
CNMI (Palau)	16	22	42	37	44	22	183
Pacific Islanders	54	146	82	71	56	57	466
Temporary Protected Status	-	2	1	-	2	1	6
Employment Advisory Opinion	5	3	3	11	2	8	32
<b>Unknown or Unreported</b>							
	228,146	275,210	268,545	300,993	381,164	258,569	1,712,631
<b>Total</b>	<b>690,459</b>	<b>773,940</b>	<b>739,414</b>	<b>955,234</b>	<b>1,267,553</b>	<b>1,034,968</b>	<b>5,461,568</b>

Source: USCIS

\* Denotes categories of aliens not originally admitted for employment or unqualified for admission.