



US Enforces Visa Retrogression for E3 Skilled Workers Immigrant Visa

The US State Department recently announced that starting January 2005, only E3 applications filed on or before January 1, 2002 will be processed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Among the professionals covered by the recent policy are *nurses, teachers, accountants and ITs*.

US immigration law numerically limits the number of employment-based immigrant visas that may be issued annually at 140,000. Retrogression occurs when the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of visas available. Hence, visa numbers are issued according to the date the petitions are filed or what is called the *priority date*. An applicant becomes eligible for a visa number when his/her priority date becomes current for processing as determined by the State Department.

According to the US Embassy, the current situation is a result of the Department of Homeland Security's commitment to speed up the processing of "Green Cards" for foreign skilled workers, including nurses, who have been working in the United States on *temporary work permits*. Nurses who are able to adjust status in the US to E3 skill worker immigrants achieve greater employment mobility and more freedom to travel outside the US.

The Embassy will continue to process E3 applications for Philippine applicants who are eligible for a visa. Even as the retrogression takes effect this January, a number of E3 applicants will be scheduled for visa interviews and will be issued E3 visa, if found qualified.

Applicants with an approved E3 visa petition on file, will be notified by the Department of State's National Visa Center (NVC) when an immigrant visa number is available. Applicants may also check the State Department's Visa Bulletin <http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletincurrent.html> for an update on the movement of priority dates and the availability of visa numbers by category. This information is also available at the US Embassy's website at <http://Philippines.usembassy.gov>.

Source: US Embassy-Manila
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