History of U.S. Immigration

Immigration Unrestricted: 1492-1874
1492 Native American migration
1565 Spain settlement
1607 English colonization
1790 The Naturalization Act governs U.S. citizenship
1819 Immigration data collection begins

Exclusion Laws and Centralized Control of Immigration: 1875-1920
1875 Criminals, prostitutes and Chinese contract laborers are excluded
1882 The Chinese Exclusion Act suspends immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years
1891 The Bureau of Immigration is created
1892 Ellis Island U.S. immigration station opens in New York Harbor
1917 Immigration from Asian Pacific countries is prohibited

National-Origins Quota System and End of Anti-Asian Exclusion: 1921-1964
1921 A national-origins quota system begins favoring Northwestern Europeans
1929 The Registry Act allows immigrants who arrived before 1921 to register retroactively
1942 The Bracero program brings 5 million Mexican temporary field workers into the U.S.
1948 The Displaced Persons Act provided admission for Baltic and Ukranian refugees
1954 U.S. operation deports 1 million Mexican immigrants

End of National-Origins Quota System and Creation of Refugee Resettlement: 1965-1985
1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished discriminatory quota system and organized immigration law
1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Act provided resettlement for Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees

Rising Immigration Control and Limiting Immigrant Rights: 1986-2000
1986 The Immigration Reform and Control Act allowed undocumented residents to apply for legal status and created employer sanctions against hiring undocumented immigrants
1990 Immigrant Investor Program encouraged U.S. businesses to hire skilled foreign workers, favoring educational, professional or financial contributions
1994 – Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act toughed border enforcement, decreased legal rights and eligibility for public benefits
1997 A new Congress mitigated some of the overly harsh restrictions

Immigration Control Linked to National Security: 2001-Present
2001 USA Patriot Act expanded authority to detain, prosecute and remove aliens suspected of terrorism and established new regulations targeting non-citizens, expanded detention, restricted immigration appeals, and the refugee resettlement system was temporarily halted while the new security procedures were implemented
2002 The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act implemented new visa procedures
2005 The Real ID Act requires proof of citizenship or legal immigrant status to obtain driving license
2006 The Secure Fence Act calls for the building of an additional 850 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border
2010 – Over 150 anti-immigration laws passed
2012

— Source: Immigration Policy Center, www.immigrationpolicy.org

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