Visa Lottery

The visa lottery, or green card lottery, is just what it sounds like: you can actually with a green card through a lottery. The official name of the visa lottery is The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (DV Program), and approximately fifty thousand visas are given out annually through this lottery program. The winners are drawn randomly, and the lottery is administered by the United States Department of State. The green card lottery was established in 1990 through the Immigration Act of 1990.

 The purpose of the lottery is to provide a certain number of visas to people from countries that have sent the fewest numbers of immigrants to the United States in the recent years. If you are a citizen of one of these countries and meet other specific requirements, you will be permitted to enter the lottery. Each country receives about seven percent of the available visas that are awarded through the lottery.

To be eligible for the lottery, you must either have a high school diploma (or its equivalent), or a minimum of two years’ experience, within the last five years, in a job that typically requires at least two years of training or experience. It is not required that you have a job offer in the United States to obtain the visa through the lottery, but you will need to show that you will be able to support yourself once you arrive in the United States.

Generally, most people who win the visa lottery currently reside outside of the United States and then have to go through consular processing (this is the way a person obtains a visa when they are outside of the United States at the time).

There are also a small number of people who win the lottery each year who are residing in the United States when they win the lottery. If you win the lottery while legally residing in the United States, you will need to file an application for adjustment of status. This is form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status. In order to adjust your status once you win a visa through the DV program, you must show that you have in fact won the lottery and that you are legally residing in the United States.

Even if you win the lottery, this does not actually guarantee that you will receive a green card because the United States government always picks more winners than visas that are actually available. For this reason, it’s imperative that you follow up immediately once you win the lottery, or you risk the chance of losing your green card by not following through quickly enough. Other than following up quickly and showing that you will be able to support yourself in the United States, you have to show that you are not inadmissible to the United States. A person can be inadmissible if they have committed certain crimes or are considered a security risk. If you have won the green card lottery, please contact us immediately so we can help you follow up and help determine if you are admissible to enter the United States.