When President Trump tweeted that he intended to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States due to COVID-19 no one quite knew what to expect.

The *presidential proclamation* prevents foreign nationals who are outside of the United States now and for the next 60 days (possibly longer if the proclamation is extended) from applying for legal permanent residency also known as a green card. Most green cards are obtained through relatives who are U.S. citizens. Citizens may apply for green cards for parents, spouse, children, and siblings. A much smaller number of green cards are obtained through work and for other reasons.

The proclamation contains a number of exceptions for U.S. citizens’ spouses and children under age 21; health-care workers, particularly those fighting the coronavirus; members of the U.S. military; and others.

According to Morgan Chalfant and Rafael Bernal, writing for *The Hill*, “the largest category of immigrant visas are those granted to spouses and children of U.S. citizens.” But spouses and most children are exempted by the executive order. They also point out: “[t]he hardest-hit category of immigrants will likely be those who seek green cards through their employers or on the basis of their professional merits.”

Notably, the executive order does not cover guest worker programs including temporary visas for farmworkers, technology workers, and others. The *New York Times* reports that President Trump “backed away from plans to suspend guest worker programs after business groups exploded in anger at the threat of losing access to foreign labor.”

President Trump states he adopted this proclamation due to the economic impact of COVID-19. He notes that in the last month and a half or so more than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment.

At least one person, New York Attorney General Letitia James, has stated publicly that she is thinking about suing President Trump over the proclamation.

By: Thursday, April 23, 2020 at 04:52 PM
