



AP SOURCES: BIDEN TO ALLOW AFGHANS TO STAY LONGER IN US - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: Afghan refugees walk through an Afghan refugee camp at Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst, N.J.

The Biden administration will continue to allow tens of thousands of Afghans who fled Taliban control more than two years ago to stay and work in the U.S., as congressional efforts have stalled that were meant to permanently resolve their immigration status, according to two people familiar with the plan.

As soon as this summer, eligible refugees will be able to renew temporary work permits and protections from deportation for another two years, according to two administration officials, who spoke to The Associated Press condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss plans that haven't yet been released. The protections were initially given in 2021, and renewed last year.

The effort is a temporary fix for more than 76,000 Afghans who arrived in the U.S. following the military's chaotic and deadly withdrawal of U.S. troops, some of the darkest moments of Biden's presidency. Many of those who arrived in the country have worked with U.S. officials, some for many years, as translators, interpreters and other partners.

Details of the renewal were first reported by CBS News. An official announcement is expected by the Department of Homeland Security later this week.

Immigrant advocate groups and veterans who have been working alongside the government trying to find a more permanent pathway for Afghans called the move a bandaid — but better than nothing.

" Afghans have been languishing on our shores awaiting a long-term answer and Congress continues to play games with their future," said Shawn Van Diver, a Navy veteran and head of #AfghanEvac, a coalition supporting Afghan resettlement efforts. But he said he was happy the Biden administration would allow them to stay as Congress can't find a solution.

The U.S. government admitted the refugees temporarily as part of Operation Allies Welcome, the largest resettlement effort in the country in decades, with the promise of a path to life in the U.S. for their service.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers in Congress had hoped to resolve their immigration status as part of a year-end government funding package in December. The proposal would have enabled them to apply for U.S. citizenship come August, when their temporary status was set to expire, as was done for other refugees from other nations in the past, including those from Cuba, Vietnam and Iraq.

But that effort failed over some Republican opposition, most notably Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who argued last year the bill went too far by including evacuees beyond those "who were our partners over the last 20 years," and providing a road to residency without the proper screening required.

Some lawmakers are hopeful that with advanced screening measures added to the bill, it can gain the support needed to pass a Republican-controlled House and a slim Democratic majority in the Senate.

"It cuts to the core question of whether the U.S. keeps its promise of protection to its allies," said Helal Massomi, an evacuee from Afghanistan and Afghan policy advisor at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, in a statement Monday. "Congress needs to keep our nation's promise and make it clear to Afghans that this country is more than their temporary safe haven — it's their home."