

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

## What Is Trump's 'Gold Card' Route to Citizenship and How Might It Work?

Source: Solcyré Burga, CNN.com, February 28, 2025

President Donald Trump announced Tuesday evening that he would be selling a “gold card,” allowing foreign-born potential immigrants a pathway to citizenship for \$5 million.

“You have a green card. This is a gold card,” the President told reporters in the Oval Office. “We’re going to be putting a price on that card of about \$5 million and that’s going to give you green card privileges, plus it’s going to be a route to citizenship. And wealthy people will be coming into our country by buying this card.”

The President said that cards would begin to be sold in “about two weeks,” though experts warn that the newly-announced program cannot be done by Trump alone. “A President can't create a visa. That's for Congress to do,” says Lori Nessel, a professor at Seton Hall University’s School of Law.

The Trump Administration has been looking for ways to cut the U.S. deficit through new agencies like the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and the “gold card” could be just one such way the President is hoping to increase revenue. An Oct. 28, 2024, analysis of the Trump Administration’s fiscal plan found that it would likely increase the deficit by \$7.75 trillion over the next decade. Last year, the federal deficit reached \$1.83 trillion, according to fiscal data by the U.S. Treasury Department.

The announcement of the program also arrives as the Administration continues its crackdown on immigration, attempting to shut down asylum at the border and committing to enacting the “largest deportation operation” in U.S. history. On Tuesday, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that, with “limited exceptions,” all undocumented immigrants aged 14 or older “who were not fingerprinted or registered when applying for a U.S. visa and who remain in the United States for 30 days or longer” have to sign up for an immigration registry.

Experts say that the program shows the Administration’s priorities when it comes to immigration. “To say, on the one hand, we are going to deport everyone in this country who's here without permission and we are going to close down our borders. And then, at the same time, say we're going to dramatically increase the number of people that can come in—if they've got millions of dollars—it's very clear messaging in terms of who's wanted in American society,” says Nessel.

While there are arguably more questions about the potential gold cards than answers at present, here’s what we know so far.

### What is Trump's "gold card" route to citizenship?

Trump’s “gold card” would essentially allow wealthy foreigners to pay their way to American citizenship through a \$5 million dollar fee.

The “gold card” would replace the existing EB-5 immigrant investor visa program, which allows foreign investors to apply for lawful permanent residence if they invest in commercial enterprises and plan to create or preserve 10 permanent full-time jobs for U.S. workers, according to USCIS.

While the “gold card” visa may appear similar, experts warn that EB-5 has guardrails in place to specifically prevent the rich and wealthy from being able to purchase citizenship. “It's not about paying the government millions of dollars to get a visa. It's about showing that you have the capital available to actually improve our economy,” says Nessel.

Even for those who are granted an EB-5, the green card they receive is conditional for two years “specifically, out of concern that it is not just buying your way in,” Nessel explains. “Within 90 days of that two-year period ending, the investor has to document and show that they actually have done what they said they would do, and they are creating jobs in the [U.S.] economy.”

Nessel notes that similar visa programs in other countries have been shut down to a variety of concerns, including money laundering and tax evasion. A program that has drawn comparisons in Spain, which required

incoming immigrants to purchase property, will officially close this April due to concerns it is making housing unaffordable for locals.

During his first Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Trump said there was a “thirst” for the “gold card” visa and touted it as a way to attract entrepreneurs. “Companies can buy gold cards and, in exchange, get those visas to hire new employees,” the President said. “No other country can do this because people don’t want to go to other countries. They want to come here.”

### **How might Trump's "gold card" work?**

It is not clear how Trump’s “gold card” would work. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said at the Oval Office that potential applicants for the “gold card” visa would have to go through a vetting process to ensure they are “wonderful world-class global citizens,” but did not give further details.

When asked by the press whether Russian oligarchs could apply to the program, Trump said: “Possibly. I know some Russian oligarchs who are very nice people.”

The legality of the “gold card” visa is also in question. The EB-5 program, which the Administration said they were replacing, was created by Congress in 1990. That program allows potential immigrants who invest \$1,050,000, or \$800,000 in targeted employment areas—meaning rural areas or areas experiencing high unemployment—to apply for a green card, though there are a number of other qualifications applicants have to meet and it can be a rather lengthy process. “The EB-5 program was created by Congress. It’s in statute. The President doesn’t have the authority to override [that],” says Jorge Loweree, the managing director of programs at the American Immigration Council.

The EB-5 visa has an annual cap of about 10,000 visas a year, or some 7.1% of the 140,000 employment-based visas available every fiscal year, per the State Department.

It’s possible that there will be no caps on “gold card” visas like there are for all other visas to the U.S. “200,000 of these gold, green cards is \$1 trillion to pay down our debt and that’s why the President is doing it,” Lutnick said during Trump’s first Cabinet meeting. “Because we are going to balance this budget and we are going to pay off the debt under President Trump.” Speaking to Fox News, Lutnick said the number of people waiting for such a visa was even higher, estimating it to be 250,000, though it is not clear where he got that number from.

Lutnick has been a vocal critic of the program. On Tuesday, he called it “full of nonsense, make-believe, and fraud,” and referred to it as a “way to get a green card that was low-price.”

### **How are government officials reacting to Trump's “gold card” proposal?**

Some officials have been critical of Trump’s newly-announced proposal. Rep. Ro Khanna of California, a Democrat, said that he thought immigration should follow a merit-based approach, and asked for reform to the H-1B visa, which allows U.S. employers to sponsor foreign-born workers in a specialty occupation.

“We should welcome talented workers to America who will bring their creativity and productivity while also reforming the H1-B program to prevent abuses,” Khanna said to Newsweek.

Rep. Jake Auchincloss, a Democrat from Massachusetts, also called out Trump’s plan.

“It’s typical Trump policy in which he takes a kernel of a legitimately good idea which is that we do need immigration reform... and he takes it to a corrupt and counterproductive place,” he told CNN. “We were talking about having scientists come to America to cure disease and now he takes it to ‘let’s have Russian oligarchs here,’ to come to America and play golf with him.”

### **Possible Response Questions**

- What are your thoughts about Trump’s plan to let people purchase American citizenship for \$5 million? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.