

THE ALIEN FILE

Annual Green Card Lottery Has begun, Apply Soon!

Q CAN YOU TELL ME IF THERE are any changes to this year's lottery program?

A: THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE to the Diversity Visa lottery for 2010, which began this year in October, is the addition of Russia and Kosovo to the countries which are eligible to apply. This means increased competition for nationals from the rest of Europe. When nationals of a country take up too many green cards in the preceding years, they are disqualified from entering the annual lottery. This year, the UK (except for those born in Northern Ireland), Canada, Poland, and Brazil are not eligible to apply unless they fall into one of the limited exceptions. The official website with links to all the information and electronic application is www.dvlottery.state.gov. There is no fee to register and the registration period this year ends on Monday December 1 at 9

select from the drop-down menu: Ireland.

6. Country of Eligibility. If you are applying based on a country where you were not born, you must check the "no" button

between May and July 2008 by regular mail. Green card interviews begin October 1, 2009 and everyone who is selected must be processed prior to September 30, 2010.



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Questions of general interest will be answered in this column which is co-written by Susanna Bogue and Chris Kerosky. Send your questions to Susanna by e-mail

to sib@justimmigration.com or write Susanna Bogue, PO Box 22261, San Francisco, CA 94122-0261. The advice in this article is general in nature, so consult an immigration attorney for specific problems.

and choose the country you are claiming.

7. Digital or scanned photo(s). The application will check your photo to see if it is done correctly.

8. Your mailing address. Use a secure, long-term address where

If you are selected ...

Consult an attorney to give yourself the best odds. Being selected as a winner does not guarantee you a green card. Past immigration violations such as "unlawful presence" or "misrepresentations" can lead to a

tact the Irish Immigration Pastoral Center (415) 752-6006 or email admin@sfiipc.org to make an appointment so you can learn more and get your application on file. Please don't wait until the last minute as the registration deadline is the Monday after the Thanksgiving holiday. Remember, if you are not in, you cannot win!

The green card lottery is conducted each year by the US government to give away 50,000 green cards to people from "underrepresented" countries. Last year there were more than 9.1 million qualified applications (over 2 million more than the prior year) and almost 100,000 applications were randomly selected for only 50,000 green cards. Only 168 Irish born applicants (132 born in the South and 36 born in the North—these numbers are down 28 from last year) were notified that they had been selected. Tiny New Zealand got 269 and Australia got 590. The "big" winners who got over 5,000 were Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and the Ukraine.

The Application

There are some pointers in filling out the application this year, particularly with the photograph rules:

1. Your full name as it appears on your birth certificate. Last, First, Middle (note the box you can check if you have no middle name).
2. Your date of birth. Select the Day, Month, Year from the pull-down menus.
3. Gender—Male or Female.
4. City/Town of your birth. Example, type in: Oughterard.
5. Country of birth. Example,

fied if you are selected.

9. Country where you live today.

10. & 11. Phone number and e-mail are optional, no need to list.

12. Highest level of education you have achieved, as of today. If you select "primary school only" or "high school, no degree" then you need to use the link to ONet to see if you qualify based on your occupation. If you have a Leaving Certificate you can check "high school degree" even though graduates of American high schools get a diploma, not a degree.

13. Marriage status—check if you are unmarried, married, divorced, widowed, or legally separated (with a court separation order).

14. Number of children who are unmarried and under 21 years of age, unless they are US citizens or green card holders. Be sure to include step-children and legally adopted children. Failure to include all children is grounds for disqualifying your entire application.

15. Name, date of birth, gender, city/town, country of birth, and digital photo of your spouse.

16. Name, date of birth, gender, city/town, country of birth, and digital photo(s) of your children (if any) who are not US citizens or green card holders.

When your application is submitted electronically, a notice of receipt will be issued. Note that there is only ONE application per person. Husband and wife should both apply separately for two chances. It is expected that DV-2010 winners will be notified

Unfortunately, the 50,000 green card lottery has become another example of our dysfunctional immigration law system. Many relatives of US citizens and green card holders wait years for a green card as there are not enough "numbers" to accommodate the demand. Many employees face the same problem. As an example, the category for unskilled workers (those with just a high school diploma or who work in a job which does not require any years of experience) is limited to only 5,000 workers per year for the entire nation. No wonder there are so many undocumented, if we only let in 5,000 (including spouses and children) per year. US employers are only allowed to request 140,000 green cards for their employees, many who are here legally on J-1s or H-1Bs, yet we give away 50,000 lottery visas to those who may have absolutely no ties to the US.

Happy Thanksgiving to all. It is a time of year many Americans give thanks to their immigrant ancestors, who did not need a "number" to be legal, only a dream to come to the US. Although we are a nation of immigrants, we have turned our back on the newly arrived, even though they represent our future, the future of our social security program, and our future science and math innovators. Good luck to all the DV-2010 applicants. To the rest of you, I hope you meet someone nice over the holidays to spend the rest of your life with so that we can help you get a green card based on your marriage (for love!) to a US citizen.