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## **Visa Numbers Available for Qualified Domestics**

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Domestics and other unskilled workers with approved labor certification applications may now file for adjustment of status effective July 1, 2001, as reported by the Visa Bulletin of July. Said bulletin indicates that the "other worker" category, which includes domestics, is **current**, which means that immigrant visa numbers are available for all qualified applicants. This is indeed welcome news to a great number of Filipino domestics.

As recent as two years ago, lawyers and other experts alike made the educated guess of a ten-year wait based on previous allocations. For instance, in January 1998 the priority date being processed was December 1990. Within three and a half years, the processing time advanced by ten and a half years.

Likewise, all the other categories in the employment-based preference are current for July. All these categories, as well as the "other worker" category are anticipated to remain current for all countries for the remainder of fiscal year 2001 ending this September. Employment-based categories relate to professional and other skilled workers, investors, religious workers and domestics, and other unskilled workers.

The Department of State observed that the cutoff date movement in the previously oversubscribed categories has been notably rapid, as the fiscal year 2001 limit is 50,000 higher than normal and legislative changes eliminated the per-country limitation as long as there are unused employment numbers available.

On the other hand, the outlook is not as promising for family-based petitions. The Philippine first preference, which refers to unmarried sons and daughters of citizens, did not advance from last month's cutoff date of May 22, 1988. The same is true for family 2A preference (spouses and minor children of permanent residents), which is still September 22, 1996. The third preference, pertaining to married sons and daughters of citizens, stays at December 8, 1987. The family 2B preference (unmarried sons and daughters 21 years of age and older of permanent residents) retrogressed from June 22, 1993 in June to January 1, 1993. The fourth preference (brothers and sisters of adult citizens), progressed by one month to September 1, 1979.

Continued massive applicant demand would likely require the retrogression of the following cutoff dates for August 2001 in the case of the Philippines: family second preference and family first preference. In addition, it is possible that some family preference numbers could become unavailable in the near future.