

TIMELINE: U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS

Most of the rules about immigration are decided by each state, and there aren't many rules about who can come to America.

The U.S. government sets immigration rules for the entire country and controls who can immigrate to America.

1776

America declares independence from Great Britain.

1815

Lots of people start to immigrate to America, about 6,000 people a year.

1790

U.S. government says anyone who lives here is a citizen as long as they are white.

1840s

More than 1 million Irish immigrate to America to escape the potato famine.

1875

U.S. Supreme Court decides the U.S. government should handle American immigration.

1891

U.S. government creates the U.S. Immigration Service to oversee people coming to America. Ellis Island opens the following year, in 1892.

1907

U.S. immigration reaches its peak with 25,000 people a day going through Ellis Island.

1924

U.S. government passes a new immigration law that limits how many people can come to America. More immigrants from European countries are allowed to enter than people from the rest of the world.

1965

U.S. government passes a new immigration law that allows more people from the rest of the world to come to America.

1770 1790 1810 1830 1850 1870 1890 1910 1930 1950 1970