

Printing Debacle at USCIS: Employees, Employers Harmed by Government Failure to Print Documents

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Foreign nationals with approved permanent residence applications but no actual permanent resident card (known as Green Cards) are not the only ones dealing with the [printing back-up at USCIS](#). After deciding to bring the printing of Green Cards and all other employment authorization documents in-house, USCIS is not able to keep up with the demand. [It reportedly has a backlog](#) of 75,000 other employment authorization documents (EADs) in addition to a backlog of 50,000 Green Cards.

Green Card holders are required by law to carry evidence of their permanent residency status. For most, this means carrying their unexpired residency cards. Green card holders who are changing jobs also may choose to use the unexpired residency card to prove that they have employment authorization and complete Form I-9 employment verification documents. The delayed card production creates harm in both of these situations. The EAD card production delays create further chaos and harm to these workers. Not only must a foreign national working on an EAD present a valid card to start new employment, but the card itself, generally valid for only one or two years, needs to be renewed and presented for reverification to allow the foreign national to continue working. Work interruptions caused by the lack of card production at USCIS unfairly harm both the employee and the employer.

[Certain foreign nationals with EADs](#) (such as refugees), those whose cards are based on adjustment of status applications, and [students filing for STEM OPT EADs](#) may continue working for up to 180 days with an expired EAD if their renewal application was submitted prior to the expiration date of their current card. But foreign nationals who are dependents of L-1 and J-1 visa holders and DACA recipients who are working on EADs have no such “grace period.” These days, even that six-month grace period may not be enough if card production stops or is delayed further.

The inability of the government to do its job leads to extreme consequences. Employees are not able to start or continue jobs — putting their families at serious risk. It also undermines employers who cannot hire essential workers and end up having to put continuing projects at risk. Given USCIS’ self-inflicted printing problem, perhaps it is time the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) prioritizes printing, come up with an interim card solution, or at the very least, create new and longer “grace periods” based upon timely filing of EAD applications.

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