

# Advocates Push for Liberians to Apply for Green Cards as Deadline Approaches

Article By:

Norris McLaughlin P.A.

---

Despite the rare passage of legislation providing Liberians in the United States a direct path to citizenship, few have completed the application process. Now that the Dec. 20, 2021, deadline to apply has passed, advocates from across the country are fighting for an extension to allow certain Liberians in the United States access to obtain green cards.

## The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act

In December 2019, Congress passed the [Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act \(LRIF\)](#), the first law passed to extend permanent legal status to a new group of foreigners in over a decade. The law provided Liberians who can prove they have continuously resided in the United States since November 20, 2014, immediate access to apply for legal status and obtain a green card.

In January of 2020, the program was launched under the Trump administration. At that time, it was estimated that approximately [10,000 Liberians](#) in the United States were immediately eligible for the program. Nevertheless, participation in the program has been underwhelming.

## Barriers for Liberians to Participate

Unfortunately, despite the estimated 10,000 eligible Liberians, only approximately [3,500 applications](#) were filed in the past two years. Roughly half have been approved.

Many have attributed the under-participation to a lack of trust among the Liberian community in the application process. The program became available under the Trump administration, which was known for its aggressive anti-immigration policies. Additionally, the application fees associated with the program exceed \$1,000 per person, creating a financial barrier for some individuals otherwise eligible for the program. In addition, the delay in processing times for immigration paperwork, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has done the program no favors.

According to a [recent article](#) by Axios, Pennsylvania is the state with the most applications under the program, with a total of 660. Slow processing times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, plus high costs associated with the application process, meant only 1,316 applications were approved by September 2021.

## Pennsylvania Advocates Push for Extension

The LRIF program was limited to two years, and the window for applications officially closed on Dec. 20, 2021. However, advocates are fighting to extend the application window to allow for greater participation in the program.

Extending the program has already received support in Congress. Congressman Dean Phillips (D-MN) recently introduced [H.R. 6233](#), the Liberian Refugee Fairness Extension Act. If passed, the bill will extend the deadline to apply for relief under LRIF by another year, to Dec. 20, 2022. Currently, the bill awaits a vote. Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA) has already [expressed support](#) for the measure.

While lawmakers consider extending LRIF, advocates continue to work to ensure Liberians in the United States are aware of the program and have equitable access to it.

©2025 Norris McLaughlin P.A., All Rights Reserved

---

National Law Review, Volume XII, Number 13

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/advocates-push-liberians-to-apply-green-cards-deadline-approaches>