

Global Immigration alert

February 2026

United States

USCIS announces that initial FY 2027 H-1B cap registration period will open March 4th

Executive summary

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced that the initial registration period for the fiscal year (FY) 2027 H-1B cap will run from 4 to 19 March 2026. During this period, prospective petitioners and representatives must complete and submit electronic registrations, using a USCIS online account, and pay the required \$215 registration fee for each beneficiary.

Background and analysis

On 30 January 2026, USCIS announced that it will open the H-1B cap registration period for FY 2027 on Wednesday, 4 March 2026 at 12pm Eastern Time, and will permit the submission of registrations through to 12pm Eastern Time on Thursday, 19 March 2026. Petitioning employers that do not already have a USCIS online account must create an organizational account to participate in the H-1B registration process, and representatives may add company clients to their accounts at any time.

Prospective petitioning employers or representatives will be able to draft, edit, and sign cap-subject H-1B registrations prior to final payment and submission. However, H-1B registrations cannot be submitted until 12 pm 4 March 2026 and all registrations for FY 2027 must be submitted by 12 pm on 19 March 2026. USCIS will continue to require that a petitioner only file an H-1B cap-subject petition, including a petition for a beneficiary who is eligible with an advanced degree, if the registration for that beneficiary was selected during the electronic registration process.

USCIS intends to complete the selection process after the initial registration period closes. USCIS has indicated that it will issue selection notifications by 31 March 2026 via the

myUSCIS online accounts. Additional information on the electronic registration process is available on the [H-1B Electronic Registration Process](#) page, which USCIS has indicated it will update prior to the initial registration period.

In a departure from previous years, for FY 2027, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has implemented a new weighted H-1B selection process that prioritizes allocating visas to higher-skilled and higher-paid workers to better protect the wages, working conditions, and job opportunities of American workers. Under this system, USCIS will continue to treat each beneficiary as a unique entry in the registration pool; however, USCIS will assign more weight to beneficiaries who are offered higher Department of Labor wage levels, so that registrations with higher wage levels have a greater chance of selection.

If USCIS receives registrations for unique beneficiaries during the initial registration period that exceed the cap limit, it will conduct a weighted selection lottery among properly submitted registrations. If USCIS does not receive enough registrations to meet the cap, USCIS will select all registrations filed for unique beneficiaries during the initial registration period.

What this means

If USCIS receives enough properly submitted registrations for unique beneficiaries by 19 March 2026 to reach the congressionally-mandated annual H-1B cap, the agency will run the new weighted selection process and issue selection notifications through users' myUSCIS online accounts. In the event USCIS does not receive sufficient registrations to meet the annual 85,000 cap, all registrations for unique

beneficiaries that were properly submitted during the initial registration period will be selected.

USCIS intends to conduct the selection process and notify prospective petitioners and representatives with at least one selected registration by 31 March 2026. Only petitioners with selected registrations will be eligible to file H-1B cap-subject petitions, including petitions qualifying for the advanced degree exemption, during the filing period indicated on the selection notice.

USCIS has not yet announced the precise petition filing window for the FY 2027 H-1B cap. Based on recent practice, it is likely that the filing period will begin on or around 1 April 2026 and extend for up to 90 days for selected beneficiaries.

We will continue to monitor and share future developments as USCIS updates its guidance on the FY 2027 H-1B cap season. For additional information, or if you wish to discuss this further, please contact your EY Law LLP professional or Mehlman Jacobs LLP professional.

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