



Explainer: Gold Card

Introduction

On September 19, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) that establishes a Gold Card program that authorizes foreign nationals who make a one million dollar donation to the Department of Commerce to become eligible for an EB-1 or EB-2 Green Card through an expedited process. In addition, it [authorizes](#) corporations to bring foreign nationals to the United States through this program as long as they donate two million dollars.

The executive order frames the Gold Card as a tool to attract high-capacity contributing immigrants who can “affirmatively benefit” the country by directing funds toward commerce and industry. The program is expected to start its implementation on December 18, 2025.

At first glance, the Gold Card appears to represent a bold rethinking of how capital and immigration intersect. But it also raises [legal and practical questions](#) about the limits of executive authority and fairness in the immigration system. This explainer highlights how the program works, what the administration claims it will achieve, and what critics warn could go wrong.

Gold Card Processing

The application process and costs for a Gold Card and its variations are as follows:

1. Interested individuals must sign up [online](#) via the Gold Card website and select which variation of the Gold Card is being applied for. These variations, their benefits, and their prices are as follows:
 - a. **For Individuals:**
 - i. **Trump Gold Card:** \$1 million contribution after signing up, providing the processing fee, and receiving DHS approval after vetting, in order to “receive U.S. residency in record time.”
 - ii. **Trump Platinum Card:** \$5 million contribution after signing up, providing the processing fee, and receiving DHS approval after vetting, in order to “have the ability to spend up to 270 days in the United States without subject to taxes on non-U.S. income.”
 - a. Per the Gold Card website, this visa is not yet considered “released” and has an ongoing waitlist.
 - b. **For Businesses:**



i. **Trump Corporate Gold Card:** \$2 million contribution after signing up, providing the processing fee, and receiving DHS approval after vetting, to “onboard a preferred candidate.”

2. All variations of the Gold Card require DHS vetting. Once approved, the Gold Card will **provide the applicant lawful permanent residence** through either the EB-1 or EB-2 visa categories.

3. Information pertaining to potential additional costs of gold cards for family members and the Platinum Card 270-day non-U.S. income tax benefit remain unclear.

Relationship to Existing Visa Categories

Though the Gold Card is new in concept, the administration intends it to function within the scaffolding of existing immigration law. As such, the donation is a lever for satisfying or supplementing EB-1 or EB-2 requirement criteria, such as extraordinary abilities or national interest waivers.

In effect, the administration is not creating a wholly detached visa category, but rather a special expedited pathway through which contributions bolster one’s eligibility in conventional categories.

Supporters of the Gold Card highlight several intended **benefits**:

1. **Attract investment:** The program aims to draw wealthy and entrepreneurial immigrants who will bring new capital and business activity to the U.S. economy.
2. **Generate revenue:** Large financial gifts and related fees could provide new funding for federal programs that promote commerce and industry.
3. **Simplify the EB-5 process:** By relying on a clear financial threshold, the program could streamline the visa process and reduce the complexity seen in programs like the EB-5 investor visa. Because contributions are not tied to specific projects or job-creation requirements, the program could be easier to manage and less bureaucratic than current investor pathways.

Legal and Practical Concerns

Despite the administration’s framing, the Gold Card has immediately drawn critique from some immigration scholars, attorneys, policy analysts, and members of Congress.

1. **Constitutional and Statutory Authority:** One of the sharpest objections is that only Congress has the constitutional power to define and allocate immigrant visa categories, quotas, and eligibility criteria. **Legal scholars** argue that the executive cannot bypass that through a unilateral



order. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) already comprehensively regulates preference categories, caps, and statutory bases for green cards. Adding a payment shortcut could clash with those structures.

2. Fairness and Equality Concerns: Some people have raised equity and fairness concerns. In their opinion, the Gold Card effectively commodifies access to U.S. permanent residency. Those with sufficient means can buy a faster path, while others must rely on traditional, slower or more stringent routes.

3. Undercut the EB-5 Program: Comparisons have been drawn between the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program visa and the Gold Card visa program for their intent in providing economic benefits to the United States. The EB-5 visa requires applicants to make an investment of one million dollars (or \$800,000 in rural areas) that could create or preserve ten permanent full-time jobs for qualified U.S. workers. The Gold Card program could derail the EB-5 program and the investments it attracts. Instead of applying for permanent residence through the EB-5, wealthy foreign investors might opt for the simpler path that the Gold Card offers.

Conclusion

The Gold Card program represents a significant shift in U.S. immigration policy. While the program is promoted as a way to attract investment and strengthen the economy, it also raises fundamental questions about fairness and legality. Ultimately, the program's success will depend on whether it strikes a balance between its economic opportunities and the principles of fairness, integrity, and the rule of law.