

WORLD

# Trump's Merit-Based Immigration System Echoes Australia, Canada Policy

BY JULIANA ROSE PIGNATARO

ON 08/03/17 AT 3:47 PM

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President Donald Trump has backed a bill that would shift immigration policy in the United States to a merit-based system. Dubbed the RAISE Act (for “Reforming American Immigration through Strong Employment”), the bill would establish a point system to sort potential immigrants based on factors like age, education, English language proficiency and other categories. In that, it would echo similar systems in Australia, Canada and New Zealand — though with key differences seized upon by critics.

families and demonstrate skills that will contribute to the economy," Trump said Wednesday.

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If the bill makes it through Congress, the merit-based system would decide which potential immigrants receive the 140,000 visas available annually, prioritizing those who are of prime working age, highly educated, fluent in English, have a lucrative job offer or boast other notable achievements. Trump has long praised similar immigration systems in places like Canada.

"Switching away from this current system of lower-skilled immigration and instead adopting a merit-based system will have many benefits," Trump said during a March address to a joint session of Congress. "It will save countless dollars, raise workers' wages and help struggling families — including immigrant families — enter the middle class."



Senior adviser Stephen Miller sparred with CNN's Jim Acosta over the newly proposed immigration bill at the White House, Aug. 2, 2017. Photo: Getty Images


But the fledgling bill is not without controversy.

"Are we just going to bring in people from Great Britain and Australia?" CNN's Jim Acosta asked White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller of the English proficiency portion of the system during a press conference Wednesday.

"I am shocked at your statement, that you think only people from Great Britain and Australia would know English," Miller shot back. "It's actually — it reveals your cosmopolitan bias to a shocking degree... That you think only people from Great Britain

world.

The English proficiency provision was by no means the only controversial aspect of the proposal.

“One of the  objectives of the current bill in the U.S. would be to cut the family,” [Demetrios Papademetriou](#), senior fellow of the [Migration Policy Institute](#) (MPI) and president of MPI Europe told International Business Times. “It would shift the American immigration system much more toward skills, language and education. It would reduce numbers overall with the reduction coming exclusively from the family category.”

And while Canada and Australia also give points based on skills, language and education, they’ve allowed family immigration to continue in its own lane — something not present in the current U.S. bill. Another glaring omission, to some critics, is the lack of attention to women.

“Using a merit-based system of points that focuses on things like education attainment relies on educational opportunities in the home country or the ability to travel internationally,” [Joshua Breisblatt](#), policy analyst at the [American Immigration Council](#), told IBT. “In countries where women have less access to education or work opportunities, they’re potentially going to be excluded from the merit-based system.”

Past proposals, in some instances, have tried to rectify this problem by inserting provisions geared toward those that might not have such opportunities.

“In a 2013 Senate Bill that passed, there were points given for being a caregiver or civic involvement in an attempt to sort of make up for that,” said Breisblatt. “But there’s none of that in this bill.”

Countries across the world are moving toward a hybridization of merit-based systems and systems like that of the one currently in place in the United States. Trump's endorsement of Wednesday's bill was merely the first step in moving the U.S. toward a policy that has been debated for years.

“This is really the beginning of the process,” Papademetriou told IBT. “It will lead to a battle royale.”



President Donald Trump announces the bill reforming immigration at the White House, Aug. 2, 2017. Photo: Getty Images

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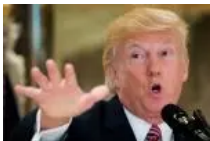
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