

23-3 National Origins Quota Act (1924)

Bowing to pressure from nativists and restrictionist groups, Congress passed several measures intended to stem the flow of immigrants into the United States in the post-war period. Anti-immigrant sentiment was directed largely at those arriving from eastern and southern European countries, people who nativeborn white Americans believed to be inassimilable. The National Origins Quota Act of 1924 superceded similar but weaker legislation of 1917 and 1921, and proved to be a most effective instrument in curtailing the entry of "undesirables" into the United States. SOURCE: Henry Steele Commanger, Documents of American History, pp. 192-194; U.S. Bureau of Immigration, Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration (1924), p. 24 ff.

... The "Immigration Act of 1924" ... which supplants the so-called quota limit act of May 19, 1921, the latter having expired by limitation at the close of the fiscal year just ended, makes several very important changes not only in our immigration policy but also in the administrative machinery of the Immigration Service. Some of the more important changes in these respects will be briefly referred to.

It will be remembered that the quota limit act of May, 1921, provided that the number of aliens of any nationality admissible to the United States in any fiscal year should be limited to 3 per cent of the number of persons of such nationality who were resident in the United States according to the census of 1910, it being also provided that not more than 20 per cent of any annual quota could be admitted in any one month. Under the act of 1924 the number of each nationality who may be admitted annually is limited to 2 per cent of the population of such nationality resident in the United States according to the census of 1890, and not more than 10 per cent of any annual quota may be admitted in any month except in cases where such quota is less than 300 for the entire year.

Under the act of May, 1921, the quota area was limited to Europe, the Near East, Africa, and Australasia. The countries of North and South America, with adjacent islands, and countries immigration from which was otherwise regulated, such as China, Japan, and countries within the Asiatic barred zone, were not within the scope of the quota law. Under the new act, however, immigration from the entire world, with the exception of the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Mexico, the Republic of Cuba, the Republic of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone, and independent countries of Central and South America, is subject to quota limitations. The various quotas established under the new law are shown in the following proclamation of the President, issued on the last day of the present fiscal year:

**BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

A PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is provided in the act of Congress approved May 26, 1924, entitled "An act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States, and for other purposes" that—

"The annual quota of any nationality shall be two per centum of the number of foreign-born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890, but the minimum quota of any nationality shall be 100 (Sec. 11 (a)). . . .

“The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Labor, jointly, shall, as soon as feasible after the enactment of this act, prepare a statement showing the number of individuals of the various nationalities resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890, which statement shall be the population basis for the purposes of subdivision (a) of section 11 (sec. 12 (b)).

“Such officials shall, jointly, report annually to the President the quota of each nationality under subdivision (a) of section 11, together with the statements, estimates, and revisions provided for in this section. The President shall proclaim and make known the quotas so reported” (Sec. 12 (e)).

Now, therefore, I, Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States of America acting under and by virtue of the power in me vested by the aforesaid act of Congress, do hereby proclaim and make known that on and after July 1, 1924, and throughout the fiscal year 1924-1925, the quota of each nationality provided in said Act shall be as follows:

Country or area of birth	<i>Quota</i> 1924-1925
Afghanistan.....	100
Albania	100
Andorra	100
Arabian peninsula (1, 2).....	100
Armenia.....	124
Australia, including Papua, Tasmania, and all islands appertaining to Australia (3, 4).....	121
Austria	785
Belgium (5)	512
Bhutan	100
Bulgaria	100
Cameroon (proposed British mandate).....	100
Cameroon (French mandate).....	100
China	100
Czechoslovakia.....	3,073
Danzig, Free City of.....	228
Denmark (5, 6)	2,789
Egypt	100
Esthonia	124
Ethiopia (Abyssinia)	100
Finland	170
France (1, 5, 6)	3,954
Germany	51,227
Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1, 3, 5, 6)	34,007
Greece	100
Hungary.....	473
Iceland.....	100
India (3)	100
Iraq (Mesopotamia).....	100
Irish Free State (3).....	28,567

Italy, including Rhodes, Dodekanesia, and Castellorizzo (5)	3,845
Japan	100
Latvia	142
Liberia.....	100
Liechtenstein	100
Lithuania	344
Luxemburg	100
Monaco	100
Morocco (French and Spanish Zones and Tangier)	100
Muscat (Oman)	100
Nauru (proposed British mandate) (4)	100
Nepal.....	100
Netherlands (1, 5, 6).....	1,648
New Zealand (including appertaining islands (3, 4)	100
Norway (5).....	6,453
New Guinea, and other Pacific Islands under proposed Australian mandate (4)	100
Palestine (with Trans-Jordan, proposed British mandate).....	100
Persia (1)	100
Poland	5,982
Portugal (1, 5)	503
Ruanda and Urundi (Belgium mandate).....	100
Rumania	603
Russia, European and Asiatic (1)	2,248
Samoa, Western (4) (proposed mandate of New Zealand).....	100
San Marino	100
Siam	100
South Africa, Union of (3)	100
South West Africa (proposed mandate of Union of South Africa).....	100
Spain (5)	131
Sweden	9,561
Switzerland	2,081
Syria and the Lebanon (French mandate).....	100
Tanganyika (proposed British mandate)	100
Togoland (proposed British mandate)	100
Togoland (French mandate)	100
Turkey	100
Yap and other Pacific islands (under Japanese mandate) (4).....	100
Yugoslavia.....	671

1. (a) Persons born in the portions of Persia, Russia, or the Arabian peninsula situated within the barred zone, and who are admissible under the immigration laws of the United States as quota immigrants, will be charged to the quotas of these countries; and (b) persons born in the colonies, dependencies, or protectorates, or portions thereof, within the barred zone, of France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, or Portugal, who are admissible under the immigration laws of the United States as quota immigrants, will be charged to the quota of the country to which such colony or dependency belongs or by which it is administered as a protectorate.
2. The quota-area denominated "Arabian peninsula" consists of all territory except Muscat and Aden, situated in the portion of that peninsula and adjacent islands, to the southeast of Iraq, or Palestine with Trans-Jordan, and of Egypt.
3. Quota immigrants born in the British self-governing dominions or in the Empire of India, will be charged to the appropriate quota rather than to that of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There are no quota restrictions for Canada and Newfoundland. . . .
4. Quota immigrants eligible to citizenship in the United States, born in a colony, dependency, or protectorate of any country to which a quota applies will be charged to the quota of that country.
5. In contrast with the law of 1921, the immigration act of 1924 provides that persons born in the colonies or dependencies of European countries situated in Central America, South America, or the islands adjacent to the American continents (except Newfoundland and islands pertaining to Newfoundland, Labrador and Canada), will be charged to the quota of the country to which such colony or dependency belongs.

GENERAL NOTE.—The immigration quotas assigned to the various countries and quota-areas should not be regarded as having any political significance whatever, or as involving recognition of new governments, or of new boundaries, or of transfers of territory except as the United States Government has already made such recognition in a formal and official manner. . . .

CALVIN COOLIDGE.

1. Why was the quota law of 1921 ineffective?
2. How were quotas determined for 1924? Why might Nepal and Syria have the same quota? Which quota was more likely to get filled?