The March 2026 Visa Bulletin: What It Means for SIJS Youth

February 26, 2026

The March 2026 Visa Bulletin reflects significant forward movement in the EB-4 category, with a Final Action Date of **July 15, 2021,** and a Filing Date of **January 1, 2023**. For comparison, in February 2026, the EB-4 Final Action Date was January 1, 2021, and the EB-4 Filing Date was March 15, 2021. This movement means that on March 1, 2026, many youth with Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) will be able to apply for adjustment of status and accompanying work authorization. This resource is meant to provide guidance to advocates who work with SIJS youth who are eligible to file for adjustment of status based on the March 2026 Visa Bulletin.

Why does the movement on the Visa Bulletin matter for SIJS youth?
SIJS is a humanitarian status that provides protections and a pathway to lawful permanent residence to immigrant children up to the age of 21 who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by their parent(s), and where a state juvenile court has determined that it is not in their best interest to be returned to their country of origin. *See* INA § 101(a)(27)(J). A child who receives SIJS can apply for lawful permanent residence once a visa is immediately available and they meet the other eligibility requirements. *See* INA § 245(h). Because of a visa backlog which only Congress has the power to fix, SIJS youth must wait years before a visa is available for them to apply for adjustment of status to lawful permanent residence. The movement in the March 2026 Visa Bulletin means that many youth who have been in the SIJS visa backlog for years will now be able to apply for lawful permanent residence.

What is the Visa Bulletin and how does it work?
The Department of State issues a chart each month that summarizes visa availability for different visa categories and countries. This chart is called the Visa Bulletin. The chart for the upcoming month is released around the middle of each month. The Visa Bulletin tells people which categories of visas are backlogged, versus immediately available or "current," and allows people to track their progress toward having a current priority date. An SIJS youth's priority date is the date that the petition for SIJS (Form I-360) was received by USCIS.

There are two different charts in the Visa Bulletin relevant to SIJS youth: the "Final Action Dates" Chart for employment-based visas, and the "Dates for Filing" Chart for employment-based visas. If a SIJS youth's priority date is earlier than the date listed in the **Final Action Dates Chart** for EB-4, then the SIJS youth has a visa available to them and is eligible to receive lawful permanent residence, also known as a green card, through adjustment of status. If a SIJS youth's priority date is earlier than the date listed in the **Dates for Filing Chart** for EB-4, **and**

USCIS is using the Dates for Filing Chart (rather that the Final Action Dates Chart) for a given month according to this webpage, then the young person is eligible to **file** their adjustment application with USCIS that month, assuming USCIS has jurisdiction over their adjustment application (though they cannot actually adjust status and get their green card until their priority date is current on the Final Action Dates chart). For more information on the Visa Bulletin, please see the End SIJS Backlog Coalition's Resource **"Breaking Down the Visa Bulletin: What SIJS Advocates Need To Know (April 2024)."**

Why was there such significant movement in the March Visa Bulletin?
While it is not uncommon to see movement in the Visa Bulletin at this time of year, according to the notes accompanying the March 2026 Visa Bulletin, visa issuance rates for immigrants from certain countries have decreased due to recent visa bans. *See* section D titled "Availability of Family-Sponsored and Employment-Based Visas" on this page. This has meant that filing and final action dates have advanced across the various visa categories, including EB-4.

Which chart is USCIS using for March 2026?
USCIS is using the Dates for Filing Chart for March 2026. According to USCIS, when the agency determines that there are more immigrant visas available for the fiscal year than there are known applicants for such visas, USCIS will instruct applicants to use the "Dates for Filing" Chart in the given month's Visa Bulletin.

As of this resource's issuance, we do not yet know what chart USCIS will use for April 2026.

Will the April 2026 Visa Bulletin advance again?
It is not clear. The same note on the Visa Bulletin referenced above states that visa availability may be impacted in the future by administrative actions or changes in demand for visas. This could lead to either further advancement or retrogression. It is important to consider both possibilities when working to file adjustment of status applications for SIJS youth clients.

How does eligibility to file for adjustment pursuant to the March 2026 Visa Bulletin impact the ability to renew SIJS Deferred Action?
Young people who are eligible to apply for adjustment of status pursuant to the March 2026 Visa Bulletin—either because their priority date is current under the Final Action Dates chart, or because their priority date and immigration posture allow them to file with USCIS under the Dates for Filing Chart (see below section discussing USCIS adjustment jurisdiction)—may not be eligible to renew any previous grant of SIJS deferred action and corresponding work authorization. This is because the 2022 SIJS Deferred Action Policy currently in effect as per the November 2025 and January 2026 orders in ACR v. Noem states that deferred action is available to SIJS beneficiaries "who cannot apply for adjustment of status solely because an immigrant visa number is not immediately available." However, those who can apply for adjustment of status have an independent mechanism to obtain work authorization, as filing an adjustment of status application (Form I-485) entitles the applicant to apply for work authorization under 8 CFR § 274a.12(c)(9). In any event, it is unclear how USCIS will process SIJS deferred action renewals generally in light of the ongoing litigation. See this resource for more information.

What agency has jurisdiction over the adjustment application of an SIJS beneficiary who is in removal proceedings or has a removal order?

If a SIJS youth is in removal proceedings or has an immigration court-issued removal order, then generally the immigration court—not USCIS—has jurisdiction over their adjustment application. The exception to this is if the young person was placed into removal proceedings as an "arriving alien"—something that would be noted with a checked "arriving alien" box at the top of the Notice to Appear, which is the charging document that initiates removal proceedings.

- For people charged in removal proceedings as "arriving aliens," USCIS has exclusive jurisdiction over their adjustment of status application regardless of the posture of any removal proceedings. Thus, these young people can file with USCIS without having to take any steps in immigration court, though they should then seek postponements of the immigration court proceedings to avoid a removal order while USCIS adjudicates the adjustment application.
- SIJS youth in removal proceedings who are not charged as "arriving aliens" have two potential options: (1) file their adjustment application with the immigration court, or (2) seek to have removal proceedings terminated and then file the adjustment application with USCIS.
    - *Filing the adjustment application with the immigration court:* SIJS youth pursuing this option will need to pay, or seek a fee waiver for, the $1,500 fee imposed by the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" when a noncitizen files an adjustment application in immigration court. SIJS youth pursuing this option will not be able to benefit from the Dates for Filing Chart; instead they generally[1] will only be able to file the adjustment application in immigration court if their priority date is earlier than the EB-4 Final Action Date, which for March 2026 will be July 15, 2021.
    - *Seeking termination to file the adjustment application with USCIS*. For SIJS youth to benefit from the Dates for Filing Chart, they will need to file their adjustment of status application with USCIS, and thus, if they are in removal proceedings and not charged as an "arriving alien," will need to seek termination of the removal proceedings in order for USCIS to gain jurisdiction over the adjustment filing. Advocates can file a motion to terminate under 8 CFR § 1003.18(d)(1)(ii)(B) (or, if the case is before the Board of Immigration Appeals, under 8 CFR § 1003.1(m)(1)(ii)(B)). That provision allows IJs to terminate in their discretion if the noncitizen is prima facie eligible for "relief from removal" or "lawful status" and "USCIS has jurisdiction to adjudicate the . . . application . . . if the noncitizen were not in proceedings." Advocates could argue that the SIJS youth is prima facie eligible to seek adjustment of status with USCIS (and attain the attendant benefits like work authorization) because USCIS is using the Dates for Filing Chart in March 2026, under which the SIJS client can file their application. The motion could also cite *Matter of Coronado-Acevedo*, 28 I&N Dec. 648, 649 (A.G. 2022), which recognized that termination could be appropriate so that a Special Immigrant Juvenile can seek adjustment with USCIS. The motion should also

[1] In the past, some immigration judges accepted SIJS-based adjustment applications despite the applicant's lack of an immediately available visa. Advocates can investigate whether this is an option based on the immigration court their case is before.

include positive discretionary evidence, given that this type of termination is discretionary. Before pursuing this strategy with client consent, advocates should also consider, and thoroughly discuss with the client, the potential risks of termination, including the possibility that DHS could initiate expedited removal proceedings against the client. See for example this FAQ on expedited removal and youth.

- Some SIJS youth who are otherwise eligible to seek adjustment under the March 2026 Visa Bulletin have a final removal order. Those who received an immigration court removal order are still considered to be "in removal proceedings" for purpose of adjustment jurisdiction, and thus unless charged as "arriving aliens"[2] must first achieve reopening of their removal proceedings in order to file the adjustment application in immigration court, or reopening and termination to then file the adjustment application with USCIS. The timing and bases for reopening are beyond the scope of this resource, but these cases require careful consideration of the current EOIR adjudicator audience, risk analysis given the enforcement landscape, and consent from the client before implementing a reopening strategy.[3] If a SIJS youth pursues a motion to reopen, it is important to present all available statutory reopening arguments and not rely solely on a *sua sponte* reopening argument in light of the BIA's recent decision in *Matter of Yadav*, 29 I&N Dec. 438 (BIA 2026). Here is a resource on addressing immigration court removal orders. Additionally, if the removal order was issued after a failure to depart during the period of voluntary departure ordered by the immigration judge, or if it was issued *in absentia* at a hearing the SIJS youth did not attend, the SIJS youth must contend with a 10-year bar to adjustment of status. This resource describes these 10-year bars and strategies to overcome them—including, in the case of an *in absentia* removal order, by achieving rescission and reopening.

What risks and benefits should advocates discuss with SIJS beneficiary clients who are now eligible to file an adjustment of status application?

As with the filing of any application for an immigration benefit, advocates should carefully screen the client for adjustment eligibility, reviewing the USCIS Policy Manual chapter on SIJS-based adjustment of status. Advocates should discuss the risks and benefits of filing with the client and obtain the client's informed consent—preferably in writing—before filing.

Considerations include:

- *Assessing eligibility and likelihood of approval*
    - *Whether the client is eligible for SIJS-based adjustment*. While the SIJS adjustment provision at INA § 245(h) has generous inadmissibility waivers and exemptions, certain inadmissibility grounds cannot be waived. These include

[2] While SIJS youth with final removal orders who were charged as "arriving aliens" have no jurisdictional barrier to filing an adjustment application with USCIS, they should be counseled carefully about the risks of doing so. For example, the authors are aware of noncitizens with removal orders being detained at biometrics appointments. Further, advocates assisting clients in this situation should review USCIS's guidance on the exercise of discretion, which states that "USCIS generally does not exercise discretion favorably to grant adjustment where the adjustment applicant has an unexecuted removal order."

[3] National Immigration Project members may submit a request for technical assistance through the member portal to seek strategic support on reopening strategies for SIJS clients.

nearly all crime-based inadmissibility grounds with the exception of a single offense for simple possession of 30 grams or less of marijuana, for which a waiver is available. 8 CFR § 245.1(e)(3)(v)(A).
    - If there are negative discretionary factors or if an inadmissibility waiver is needed, *the likelihood that USCIS will exercise favorable discretion*. SIJS adjustment is discretionary, as is the adjudication of a waiver of any waivable grounds of inadmissibility the SIJS youth is not exempted from under INA § 245(h)(1). Advocates should consider what favorable evidence they might include to establish that the positive factors outweigh the negative.
    - Whether, based on the client's country of origin, their adjustment application and corresponding work authorization application would be subject to the January 1, 2026 adjudications pause memo. This would not necessarily be a reason not to file, but it is an important consideration for clients to be aware of.

- *Assessing potential risks*
    - Advocates should consider the potential impact of USCIS's February 2025 NTA policy on any young person who is not currently in removal proceedings, should their application be denied.
    - More broadly, advocates should consider the risk that the pursuit of the adjustment application could trigger immigration enforcement against the SIJS youth, for example detention at a biometrics appointment or an adjustment interview—both of which the authors have heard of during the second Trump administration. Given the current administration's indiscriminate and unlawful detention practices, it is wise to have a plan in place for a habeas petition in the event of a SIJS youth's detention.

- *Considering the benefits*
    - Filing an adjustment application is, of course, the means to achieve the core purpose of SIJS—lawful permanent residence. This is especially true for youth whose priority date is current, based on the March 2026 Final Action Dates chart. Further, as discussed above, it is possible that SIJS youth now eligible to file for adjustment may not be eligible to renew their SIJS-based deferred action.
    - Filing an adjustment of status application allows the applicant to obtain work authorization under category (c)(9) while the adjustment application is pending, with the ability to renew the work authorization for as long as needed until adjustment is complete. This is likely a more stable category of work authorization than deferred-action-based work authorization which many SIJS youth currently have, given the Trump administration's efforts to eradicate SIJS deferred action and the uncertainty of the outcome of current litigation challenging the administration's actions.
    - The filing window beginning on March 1 is of undetermined length and could be as short as one month. It is quite possible that the EB-4 category will retrogress in the future, and those SIJS youth who did not file during the available window will then be unable to file. For those SIJS youth who file with USCIS during the available window but who then experience retrogression, their adjustment application will remain pending with USCIS, with the ability to continue

renewing work authorization. Similarly, those who file with the immigration court while they had an available visa based on the Final Action Dates chart should have strong arguments for postponement if the EB-4 category later retrogresses. See the EOIR Status Docket Memo at 2; *Matter of Briones*, 24 I&N Dec. 355, 357 n.3 (BIA 2007).

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