

360k more immigrants eligible for late deportation

By SARAH PARNASS

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 350,000 more illegal immigrants than previously thought could earn an extra two years in the U.S. when President Barack Obama's new policy takes effect next week, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, students age 30 or younger who are enrolled in school on the day they apply will now be eligible for a two-year reprieve from deportation if they demonstrate that they came to the U.S. before their 16th birthday; lived there for the past five years; and have not been convicted of certain crimes or pose a national security threat.

Before the new rule was announced last week, the program was slated to be open to students enrolled in school as of June 15, 2012, or those who have graduated high school, received a GED or honorably left the armed services, including the Coast Guard.

Obama's policy takes effect Aug. 15, and the government will begin accepting applications for deferral that same day. The application includes a fee of \$465 used to fund the program, though exemptions will be provided for minors, homeless youth and youth with chronic disabilities that fall below 150 percent of the U.S. poverty level.

Applicants who are denied deferral will not have the option to appeal. Those approved will be able to separately apply for work authorization in the U.S.

The institute estimated in June that 1.4 million unauthorized immigrants could benefit from the program. Those estimates only included students who were enrolled in school as of that date. Speaking Tuesday at a panel at the Carnegie Institution for Science, Doris Meissner, Director of the institute's U.S. Immigration Policy Program, said as many as 1.76 million people could be eligible, based on new guidance the Homeland Security Department released Friday.

Jeanne Batalova, an author of the report, said the program is "a powerful incentive to go back to school" for young people who previously were not continuing their education.

Alejandro Mayorkas, director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, emphasized that the program only serves to delay deportation for successful applicants, without excusing "past unlawful presence."

"It does not provide a pathway to permanent residence or citizenship," Mayorkas said.

The Homeland Security Department previously said that it could need to hire more than 1,400 full-time employees, as well as contractors, to handle the requests coming in. Mayorkas said both

the number of applications and the pace at which they come in will determine how long it takes service centers throughout the U.S. to process them.

"In other words, will the agency experience a steady flow of volume from August 15th forward," Mayorkas said. "Will people who wish to request deferred action, will they file very quickly," or will they wait to see the outcome for other applicants.

Muzaffar Chishti, director of the institute's office at New York University's School of Law, said applicants' early reaction to the program and confidentiality for them, their families and their employers would be "very critical" for building confidence among potential beneficiaries.

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