

# Immigration-Policy Details Emerge

By [MIRIAM JORDAN](#)

The Obama administration on Friday revealed details of its sweeping immigration program that could allow almost one million undocumented young people to remain in the country, an initiative that is prompting nonprofit organizations to ramp up efforts to help potential beneficiaries.

According to the rules of the program, which was first announced in June, applicant information won't be shared with immigration enforcement except in cases that involve crimes. Applicants will be disqualified for offenses such as drunk driving, but not for driving without a license.

Angel Silva, an undocumented student in Los Angeles, says the immigration rules will help him get a house.

The process, which doesn't offer a path to citizenship, opens on Aug. 15, according to a 16-page guideline issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency handling the process. Applicants must provide evidence they have lived in the U.S. for five years and pay a \$465 fee. The process is expected to take several months to complete.

The rules announced Friday offer concrete details of the most significant easing of immigration policy since President Ronald Reagan granted amnesty to an estimated three million people in 1986. The Obama program offers a two-year renewable exemption from deportation and a work permit to those brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

The new policy, issued as a directive by President Barack Obama, applies to people between the ages of 15 and 30. They must meet certain criteria, including proof they have graduated high school or been discharged honorably from the U.S. military.

The initiative sidesteps a years-long stalemate in Congress over the Dream Act, draft legislation designed to legalize undocumented young people that has been ensnared in a broader debate about immigration overhaul. Mr. Obama's move was widely regarded as an attempt to energize Hispanic voters disappointed with his failure to deliver on a promise to address the fate of 11 million illegal immigrants who live in the U.S.

Critics say the program is tantamount to an amnesty. Rep. Steve King (R., Iowa), a vocal foe of illegal immigration, accused the president of "legislating by executive edit." In an interview, he said Mr. Obama had shown "contempt for the Constitution and the role of the legislature."

The government says it is exercising prosecutorial discretion to ensure enforcement resources aren't expended on low-priority cases, such as individuals who came to the U.S. as children.

Mr. King said he had hired a legal team to challenge the directive.

Grassroots groups and philanthropists, many caught by surprise by the June announcement, have scrambled to raise funds and reach potential applicants since the policy was announced.

"We've had to mount a rapid response," said Daranee Petsod, executive director of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, a national organization. Ms. Petsod is helping a variety of foundations pool resources, including one group that is creating an online fund for contributions to cover the cost of the application.

Foundations affiliated with Andrew Grove—who co-founded Intel Corp.—and with the family of blue-jeans mogul Levi Strauss and the family of Jacob Merrill Kaplan, a financier who invested in the Welch Grape Juice Company, are among organizations that have made initial commitments of more than \$1.5 million to help groups offering legal advice and setting up online tools to assist in the application process, said Ms. Petsod.

About 900,000 people, mainly from Latin America and Asia, could be eligible. The states that boast the most potential beneficiaries are California, with more than 400,000, and Texas, with more than 225,000. New York City is home to about 55,000.

The Department of Homeland Security expects to receive 3,000 applications a day and will need to hire more than 1,400 full-time workers, as well as contract labor, according to sources familiar with the situation.

Young immigrants have expressed enthusiasm for the policy, even though it won't help them attain citizenship or legal permanent residence.

"I can finish school, get a job, buy a house," said Angel Silva, a 23-year-old Los Angeles college student brought from Mexico when he was a infant.

"They're finally giving us a chance," said college student Stephanie Ortega, who attended an information session packed with 200 people at a Redwood City, Calif., church last week. "That's a start of something bigger."

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