

Mo. woman receives deferral on immigration issue

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — An English-born Missouri woman, who feared that she would need to leave the U.S. after her 21st birthday Wednesday, instead has received a deferral that will allow her to stay.

Lauren Gray, of Trenton, has lived in northern Missouri since her parents arrived on a visa when she was 4 years old. However, the parents' visa does not allow Gray to remain in the U.S. after turning 21, so she had been preparing to leave the country.

Gray and Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill announced during a conference call Wednesday that federal authorities had granted a two-year deferral earlier this week that can be renewed until Gray gains permanent residency. Gray also is to receive a work permit.

The immigration issue has received significant media attention, and Gray traveled to Washington last week to press her case.

"I was so elated. I was so happy. My future looks really bright now," Gray said, speaking from Trenton. She said the past week had been "kind of crazy."

Gray studied dance at Stephens College in Columbia and graduated in May. On Wednesday, Gray said she has a few auditions in Branson and hopes eventually to go to California. Gray planned to celebrate her birthday Wednesday night by meeting up with friends in Columbia.

McCaskill, a Democrat facing a difficult re-election bid this year, said she brought up Gray's situation during a conversation with U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

"I am very pleased that she will remain in the only country she's ever known and continue to be an important part of her community in the years ahead," McCaskill said. She added: "We should be welcoming people like Lauren into our country as opposed to putting up barriers."

Speaking to reporters at an event Wednesday in Kansas City, McCaskill said she worked hard to get the deferral with assistance from Republican Congressman Sam Graves. Graves' northern Missouri congressional district includes Trenton.

The Missouri immigration case has played out after President Barack Obama announced a new rule that stops deportation proceedings against law-abiding immigrants who were brought illegally to the U.S. as children. Initially, Gray thought the change would resolve her situation but later was told it would not.

http://www.necn.com/08/08/12/Mo-woman-receives-deferral-on-immigratio/landing_politics.html