

More Young Illegal Immigrants Apply for, and Receive, Reprieves

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The number of approvals increased from 4,591 one month ago, signaling a rapid acceleration in a program that both Democrats and Republicans — including Mitt Romney — have credited with bolstering [President Obama](#)'s standing among Latinos, earning him decisive votes for his electoral victories in at least four swing states.

The program, which began receiving applications Aug. 15, did not attract much news coverage during the presidential campaign, but it had a far-reaching effect in Latino and other immigrant communities. Young people continued to come forward to apply despite uncertainty created by Mr. Romney, who said he would stop issuing reprieves if he was elected.

Under the program, young immigrants in the United States illegally who came to the country as children can receive two-year deportation deferrals and work permits.

According to the department's figures, more than 273,000 immigrants are in the final stages of the approval process. To date, 10,101 applications were rejected before they were evaluated because they were incomplete.

Homeland Security officials did not say how many applications were denied. Republicans in Congress warn that the agency in charge, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, could be rushing to approve reprieves without performing thorough background checks.

But [immigration](#) lawyers, who have been wary of the risks the program could pose for young immigrants who have long lived without legal papers, said they had been favorably surprised by its progress.

“The application process has been a model of government efficiency,” said Don Lyster, a director in Washington of the National Immigration Law Center, an advocacy group for immigrants. Mr. Lyster said the numbers should reassure young immigrants “that the government is invested in ensuring the success of this program.”

California, Texas and New York were the top states where applicants lived. The fourth was Florida, where Mr. Obama eked out a victory based largely on Latino votes.

With the campaign over, immigration officials said they might face a new surge in applications from young people who had been waiting to see if Mr. Obama won re-election.

Mr. Obama said this week that he wanted to take up a comprehensive immigration bill soon after his inauguration, which would include a permanent path to citizenship for young immigrants who are eligible for the temporary reprieves.

In a post-mortem conference call with Republican donors on Wednesday, Mr. Romney cited the program as one of the “gifts” that he said Mr. Obama gave to his supporters. For Hispanics, Mr. Romney said, “The amnesty for children of illegals, the so-called Dream Act kids, was a huge plus for that voting group.”

The deferrals do not provide any pardon or legal status. Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, said Thursday that he thought Congress could move quickly to enact a version of the Dream Act, a bill tailored to give legal status to young immigrants.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/us/obama-immigration-program-sees-rapid-rise-in-applications.html>