

Supporters praise immigration order, call for permanent solution

By Matea Gold and Lisa Mascaro

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WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration's announcement Friday that it [will suspend](#) the deportation of young illegal immigrants who entered the United States as children drew ebullient praise from advocates who have been lobbying for changes to the country's immigration policies.

"This is huge," said Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice Education Fund. "As a result of today's decision, hundreds of thousands of young people who are American in all but paperwork will have the opportunity to live freely, work legally, and contribute to the country they love."

The move by the administration came as some of the young immigrants who have been pushing for a path to citizenship prepared to take part in college graduation ceremonies.

"I'll be walking in my black cap and gown today," said Leslye Osegueda, a political science major at UCLA. "As I celebrate this joyous day, I am thrilled that I will have the chance to use my degree to contribute to my community and to live to my fullest potential."

Osegueda is part of the United We Dream Network, a group of young immigrants who spent two years pushing for the Dream Act, a measure that would provide a path to citizenship for some children of illegal immigrants.

"Today, we have tears of joy," said Lorella Praeli, member of the UWD National Coordinating Committee. "President Obama's announcement brings peace and relief to many DREAMers. It is one step in the right direction after years of work that will allow students to apply their professional degrees and know that they need not fear deportation, that they will be able to continue living as Americans in the only country they call home."

Assistant Senate Majority Leader Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) – longtime backer of the Dream Act, which fell to defeat in Congress in 2010-- called the Obama administration's decision "an historic humanitarian moment"

"This action will give these young immigrants their chance to come out of the shadows and be part of the only country they've ever called home," he said. "These young people did not make the decision to come to this country, and it is not the American way to punish children for their parents' actions."

Still, supporters noted that the executive order would only hold as long as Obama was in office.

Frank Jannuzi, the head of Amnesty International's Washington office, praised the move but called it "a temporary measure."

"Immigrant children and their families, and the country as a whole, deserve a permanent solution, not tomorrow or after the election, but right now," said Jannuzi, who called on Congress to pass a new version of the Dream Act.

Indeed, Obama's decision to take action on immigration reform without waiting on Congress immediately thrust the issue back to the fore of the 2012 presidential contest.

"President Obama is showing great courage in taking this action, and it presents a stark contrast with the GOP's presumptive presidential nominee who has vowed to stop the Dream Act if elected," said Eliseo Medina, secretary-treasurer of the Service Employees International Union, one of the most politically active labor unions.

Tweeted House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi: "Strongly support President's decision to stop deporting DREAM Act kids. Democratic-led House passed DREAM in 2010. GOP still obstructing."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/la-pn-supporters-praise-immigration-order-call-for-permanent-solution-20120615,0,5803693.story>