

## OBAMA AMNESTY PUTS 11.2 MILLION ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN JOB FRAY



Through a new policy of his administration, President Obama opened a floodgate of opportunity for young illegal immigrants in the United States. The policy will halt the deportation of illegal immigrants who entered the country as children and allow them to obtain work permits. The question is will it be at the expense of the aspirations and ambitions of legal Americans? The announcement has been met with praise and condemnation. Young immigrants were, naturally ecstatic and hailed him as the new messiah, with Democratic leaders and his colleagues, praising him and saying that it was a long overdue decision and needed a courageous President to implement it. The Republicans, have questioned his timing, coming as it is with the Presidential elections around the corner and say it is to appease the Latinos and be one-up on his Republican rival Romney, both of whom are vying for the Latino vote. Immigrant advocates and Hispanic groups have called it a historic and defining moment in the country's history. They say the legal-status that is offered to them will help them achieve their long cherished goal of realizing the American dream. "I thank God for this day. It has changed my whole life," said Jorge Acuna, 19, a college student in Silver Spring – and not without reason did he say so. He had come to the US as a small toddler, along with his family and was on the verge of being deported to his native Colombia. Under his new found amnesty, he will pursue his dream in engineering. However, those who have been strongly opposing illegal immigrants said that the new policy would create new competition for jobs and seats in the university. They will be an added expense to numerous the states, most of whom are on austerity mode, curbing public spending. Brad Botwin, president of Help Save Maryland, a group that opposes legalization for undocumented immigrants, disappointed by the new policy said, "I see a tidal wave coming. Half of our college graduates today can't find jobs, and the unemployment rate for high-school-aged Americans is extremely high. This is unfair to U.S. citizens and legal immigrants who are out there struggling to get ahead." President Obama said that it was at best a temporary measure to help hundreds of thousands of young people and confessed it was not "a permanent fix." The policy, which is effective immediately, will be relevant to people who are under 30 years old, arrived in the country before they turned 16 and have lived in the United States for five years. They must also have no criminal record, earned a high school diploma and remained in school or served in the military. Contrary to popular assumptions, the policy just takes the specter of deportation from their heads. It does not provide them with permanent legal residency and they can renew their status every two years. No public benefits like Medicare and Medicaid are granted to them. Existing federal law already grants all undocumented immigrants the right to a public-school education and emergency hospital care. The new rights are merely an extension of earlier provisions. Administration and enforcement costs are likely to increase and there will be additional pressure on higher education systems, as the number of candidates, vying for the same number of seats, will grow. However, the expenses could be offset by the revenue it is likely to bring. Illegal workers hitherto paid in cash and were not liable for taxes. They will now have to pay taxes which will increase revenue. A study on the Dream Act, an immigration measure that was similar in nature but blocked by Congress in 2010, found that it would add \$2.3 billion in tax revenue over 10 years. Marielena Hincapie, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center in Los Angeles, said that Texas and California stood to benefit the most as their proportion of Hispanic population was highest and they would go on to open businesses, employ people and in general boost the economy. "Texas and California will definitely benefit from this," she said. Proponents of the new policy say that a more lawful atmosphere will prevail for undocumented migrants will now fearlessly report crimes. People who exploited them with threats of exposing them will now be unable to do so. However, opponents say that it will have the reverse effect, with illegal immigrants, desirous of benefiting from the amnesty scheme will use malafide means like falsifying documents to meet amnesty's legal requirements. "The first thing that will make a difference to me is that now I can drive legally," said Victor Palafox, 20, a Mexican immigrant and high school graduate who was visiting Washington from Alabama on Friday. "It gives me my humanity back." However, there is consonance and agreement between the advocates and critics of the policy on one issue. Both say that the policy is inadequate and at best a stopgap arrangement, to address the issues of the estimated 11.2 million illegal immigrants in the United States. An overhaul of the entire federal immigration system is required, they opine. "Due to congressional inaction, we have seen a lot of laws passed at the state level that in many cases only add chaos," said Clarissa Martinez, an official of the National Council of La Raza in Washington. "Where the administration is justified and able, they should intervene, as they have done in this case. But it only intensifies the need for Congress to act." However, what is really the most controversial part of the new policy is that, with one stroke, it adds hundreds of thousands of people in their teens, to the millions looking for a job in the country. Legal Americans already hard pressed for a job, with this new found competition, will be even harder pressed to land a job. Of course, most of them were already working, but as undocumented laborers they were opting for jobs others would not take. Moreover, they were accepting lesser pay and tougher working conditions. "For hundreds of thousands of young people, the immediate effect will be that they can exhale and go out and look for a job," said Gustavo Andrade, an official of the pro-immigrant group CASA of Maryland. Steven Camarota, a researcher with the nonprofit Center for Immigration said the new policy would hit low paying jobs the hardest, especially those that Americans with less than a high school education, searched for. "It doesn't seem the administration is considering the cascading consequences," Camarota said. "What does this mean for unemployed Americans who will be competing for jobs with a million-plus people who can now apply for work authorization? Is this really a good idea?"