



Illegal Immigrants Swamp DMV for California Driver's Licenses

Thousands of immigrants who are in the United States illegally started lining up on January 2 at Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offices across California to apply for driver's licenses. Legislation giving this privilege to illegal aliens (Assembly Bill 60) was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in October 2013, but it just became effective this month.



The *Los Angeles Times* reported that as of late afternoon on the first day the program became effective, at least 11,000 people had applied for the special licenses. More than 46,000 people statewide applied for special driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants on the first three days, the California Department of Motor Vehicles said on January 6. To apply for the licenses, applicants are required to verify their identities and prove they reside in California, but not that they are legally entitled to remain in the United States. If they pass the required vision, written and driving exams, the applicants will be given special licenses stating that read "FEDERAL LIMITS APPLY" in the top right corner of the front of the card, and "not valid for official federal purposes" on the back of the card.

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The *San Jose Mercury News* reported that this language is being added to fulfill a demand by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that the special licenses are distinguishable from licenses granted to citizens and legal residents of California. Whether they will be acceptable as identification to board an airplane remains to be seen.

The *Times* reported that the California DMV has prepared for the law for more than a year. The new licenses will cost the financially strapped state a considerable amount of money. An extra \$141 million has been budgeted to handle the flood of applications, which are expected to increase by more than 1.5 million over the next three years, according to DMV estimates. In anticipation of this increase, the DMV has opened four new offices and hired an additional 900 employees.

An AP report noted that while advocates of granting the licenses to illegals have encouraged the aliens



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to apply for the new licenses, they have warned those with deportation orders or criminal records to first seek legal advice since law enforcement can access DMV databases. California is one of more than 10 states that now provide licenses or an equivalent to aliens who are in the country illegally. Among the other states are Utah, Washington, Maryland, Colorado, Nevada, Connecticut, New Mexico, Vermont, and Illinois, as well as the District of Columbia. Iowa plans to give licenses to a segment of illegal immigrants.

The issuing of licenses by these states to illegal immigrants will further reduce the fear of deportation that has kept these illegal residents living in the shadows. Even more significant is President Obama's new federal policy to grant work permits and protection from deportation to millions of immigrants here illegally.

Obama announced the upcoming actions to "fix" our immigration system in his nationwide address on November 20, when he said, "We'll take steps to deal responsibly with the millions of undocumented [i.e., illegal] immigrants who already live in our country."

Summarizing the most significant features of his plan, Obama said:

So we're going to offer the following deal: If you've been in America for more than five years; if you have children who are American citizens or legal residents; if you register, pass a criminal background check, and you're willing to pay your fair share of taxes — you'll be able to apply to stay in this country temporarily without fear of deportation. You can come out of the shadows and get right with the law. That's what this deal is.

To implement the policy announced by Obama, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson sent an executive action memorandum on November 20 to the heads of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The memorandum expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) by removing its age cap and extending work authorization to three years. Johnson's order also expanded "deferred action" (another name for amnesty) by directing USCIS [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services] to establish a process, similar to DACA, for exercising prosecutorial discretion through the use of deferred action, on a case-by-case basis, to those individuals who:

- have, on the date of this memorandum, a son or daughter who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident;
- have continuously resided in the United States since before January 1, 2010;
- are physically present in the United States on the date of this memorandum, and at the time of making a request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS.

Leon Rodriguez, the director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), told Spanish-speaking reporters during a conference call in December that "undocumented" (illegal) immigrants should be able to start applying for deferred action granting them protection from deportation and work permits in February and May.

While the deferred action to be granted by USCIS is limited to the specific categories of illegal immigrants noted above, no such restrictions are imposed by the states issuing driver's licenses to illegal aliens. Virtually any resident of these states able to meet the minimal requirements set by California — proof of identity and state residency — will be able to obtain a driver's license if they can meet the same standards imposed on legal residents. Having advanced to this state of semi-legality, it



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can only be a matter of time before these illegal residents are able to win further concessions.

Correction: The original article stated that 10 states provide driver's licenses of some sort to illegal immigrants; the source document was incorrect. Not only is the number higher than 10 — and includes at least one state, Iowa, that gives licenses to a small contingent of illegal immigrants — but Oregon decided not to give licenses to illegal immigrants. We apologize for the error.

Photo of illegal immigrants lining up at a California DMV office to apply for driver's licenses: AP Images

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