Statement from El Centro’s President/CEO

President Obama’s Executive Action

November 21, 2014

Yesterday, President Obama announced Executive Action that would change the lives of many in our community. Over the past year-and-a-half, we have been disappointed by our elected officials due to their lack of movement for Comprehensive immigration Reform. We applaud the President for his bold action.

Our fight has always been about our families and communities. This executive order grants relief to a limited number of families; however, the President went even further on his action. Through this Executive Action, about five million family members, friends, and loved ones will finally start living their lives knowing they can live, work, and stay together in this country without fear of deportation.

This is a big step toward addressing our immigration crisis. It is, however, only temporary and merely taking the place of Congress’ failure to act on the Senates comprehensive immigration bill. The only way to fix the broken immigration system once and for all is for Congress to pass – and the President to sign – Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation. This Executive Action is NOT a pathway to citizenship and does NOT grant legal status. This action will allow a number of people that are eligible to work legally and pay taxes. It is both temporary and revocable.

Highlights:

* Parents of U.S. citizens or permanent residents will be allowed to stay if they have lived in the U.S. for five years or longer, register with the appropriate agency, pass a criminal background check, and pay taxes.
* Under a program known as “DACA” – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, youths known as “DREAMers,” (who are illegally in the U.S. through no fault of their own) were eligible to be granted a low-priority enforcement status allowing them to stay in the U.S. and not worry about deportation. President Obama’s order eliminates the age cap and expands the universe of people who can stay.
* Nothing in the executive order covers the parents of DREAMers, only the DREAMers themselves.
* Foreign students, who are studying in the science and technology fields in the U.S., will find it easier to obtain a visa allowing them to stay.
* A new program will be created to let entrepreneurs come to the U.S. if they can demonstrate they have investors and will create jobs in the U.S.

These actions have different timelines for implementation. It will be months before we know how we apply or what the process to apply will look like. In the meantime, do not believe *anyone* who tells you there is already a process in place and can guarantee you a work permit, visa, or green card under this new program. Protect yourself from fraud. All attorneys have a license from a state bar association; make sure yours does!

This action is a welcome stop-gap for those qualified individuals and families until more permanent Comprehensive Immigration Reform can be worked out. Through this Executive Action, more people will be able to come out of the shadows and be full-fledged members of our communities.