

Whew! Immigrants in 'green card' panic find they won't be ousted;
Rumors ran wild: But there's no big penalty for missing renewal, INS
officials told those flooding their office.

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

March 23, 1996, Saturday, Correction Appended, ALL EDITIONS

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Section: NATIONAL NEWS; Pg. 01A

Length: 355 words

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Body

Two days after the deadline, nervous **immigrants** fearing they might be arrested or deported continued to pour into Atlanta's federal immigration **office** Friday seeking new "**green cards**."

Federal **officials** expect the number of resident alien ID **card renewals** to reach into the tens of thousands in metro Atlanta. They handled about 350 applications Friday and explained to Chinese, Indians, Africans, Hispanics, Vietnamese and Europeans that their status as legal residents of the United States is not in danger.

Missing the deadline "doesn't mean you're going to be deported, arrested or denied residence," said Dwight Faulkner, assistant director for the local **office** of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. "It just means you've lost your identity document for employment and your identity document for traveling."

Immigrants who fail to renew their **green cards** could face delays in citizenship applications as well as administrative hassles when trying to re-enter the country. But even those punitive measures **won't** kick in until April 20 because of a 30-day grace period.

Renewals apply only to **green card** holders who are 18 or older. Any **card** that bears the code I551 on the back is valid.

Nevertheless, local immigration lawyers were **flooded** with phone calls from **panicked** foreigners. Crystal Williams, a lawyer, said every **immigrant** who called inquiring about **green card renewals** had valid identity **cards** that did not to be updated.

"The immigration service has been good about allaying fears, but **rumors** do get out, and **rumors** that get out in small, close-knit communities can be very damaging," Williams said.

Alien resident IDs haven't been **green** for decades, and in fact have been many colors. The INS says that if the "**green**" **card** is brown or pink, its holder doesn't need a new one.

Pieter de Groot, one of those rare bearers of a truly **green card**, would have appreciated a little more publicity about the **renewals**. "We were planning to travel to Europe this week," said de Groot.

De Groot was going to attend a soldiers' reunion in his home country - but now he'll be a week late.

Correction

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A/02: IN A FRONT-PAGE STORY IN SATURDAY EDITIONS, INCORRECT INFORMATION ABOUT IMMIGRATION "**GREEN CARD**" **RENEWALS** WAS GIVEN. THE STORY SHOULD HAVE STATED THAT **RENEWALS** ARE REQUIRED ONLY OF HOLDERS OF **GREEN CARDS** ISSUED BEFORE 1979.

Correction-Date: March 24, 1996

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (96%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); DEPORTATION (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); DELAYS & POSTPONEMENTS (78%); NATURALIZATION (78%)

Company: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (90%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (90%)

Organization: IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (90%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (56%)

Geographic: ATLANTA, GA, USA (90%); GEORGIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); AFRICA (79%)

Load-Date: July 17, 1996