

Latinos hail Bam

Daily News (New York)

June 17, 2012 Sunday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 24

Length: 326 words

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Body

LOCAL LATINO leaders applauded President Obama's decision to spare nearly a million illegal immigrants from deportation - but say the historic ruling does not go far enough.

Obama's executive order - a political move that could help him retain the White House in November - allows many of the illegal immigrants who came to the U.S. as children to stay in the country and get work permits.

"With determination and the executive power of President Obama, 1 million young people will be able to stay in the country and not sleep with a nightmare," exulted City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez (D-Manhattan) on Saturday.

"This is a signal that it's time to move forward," said Rodriguez, who was flanked by students from several Hispanic countries as he stood on a Washington Heights block.

However, the elected officials were dismayed that the young illegal immigrants will still not be eligible to live out their dream of becoming citizens.

"It's definitely the right path, and it's a good step forward, but much more needs to be done," said State Sen. Adriano Espaillat (D-Manhattan), who complained that Congress has not passed the DREAM Act, which would have established a path to citizenship.

"It's not time to celebrate just yet," he said, "but we're happy."

Obama's decision is a dramatic switch for his administration.

Though Obama framed his decision on moral grounds, it was also politically savvy: Not only was it an appeal to Hispanic voters in crucial swing states such as Florida, Colorado and Nevada, it also created a stark contrast with Republicans, who have struggled to get support from **Latinos**.

GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney, who has advocated for tougher immigration laws, hinted that he would overturn the order if he were elected.

And one of Romney's top surrogates ripped Obama Saturday for excluding Congress from the process. "I thought it was an arrogant power grab," Rick Santorum said at a conservative conference.

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Graphic

NLVL

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: EXECUTIVE ORDERS (90%); IMMIGRATION (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); IMMIGRATION OF MINORS (90%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (90%); US PRESIDENTS (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (89%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (89%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (78%); DEPORTATION (78%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2016 (78%); HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (78%); VOTERS & VOTING (78%); CITIZENSHIP LAW (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (78%); POLITICAL PARTIES (77%); CONSERVATISM (77%); CITY GOVERNMENT (76%)

Person: BARACK OBAMA (89%); ADRIANO ESPAILLAT (79%); MITT ROMNEY (78%); RICK SANTORUM (58%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (90%); COLORADO, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%)

Load-Date: June 18, 2012