

Deadline may be extended for visas

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Body

About 200,000 illegal immigrants who missed a chance to apply for visas without leaving the country would get four more months to do so under a Republican-crafted bill on a fast track for a House vote.

The House plans to vote Monday on the legislation that some say will not provide enough time for all who seek the visas.

Rep. Peter T. King (R., N.Y.), one of the bill's sponsors, said he would have preferred more time but was happy to see that the bill would be considered so quickly.

The bill bypassed the committee process. Because it is scheduled for a quick vote, House rules dictate that it cannot be amended, and time for debate will be limited Monday. The bill must be approved by a two-thirds majority of those voting.

An estimated 640,000 illegal immigrants were eligible under the Legal Immigration and Family Equity Act to apply for visas without leaving the country. The law began in December and expired April 30. It applied to illegal immigrants who are spouses or relatives of U.S. citizens or legal residents or employees sponsored by employers. They had to have been in the country Dec. 21 to be eligible.

President Bush pressed for Congress to act on the issue in a letter he sent to House and Senate leaders.

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