

# Nicaraguan Group Offers Help Getting Green Cards; Effort Targets Those Under Temporary Amnesty

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## **Body**

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Earlier this month, Congress passed legislation that will grant automatic permanent residency to about 150,000 Nicaraguans who came to the United States as refugees and are living here under temporary amnesty. Now, the Washington area chapter of the Nicaraguan Fraternity, an assistance and advocacy group, is gearing up to provide hundreds of local Nicaraguans with legal help in obtaining their green cards.

Onofre Gutierrez, the group's Alexandria-based director, said applicants need to have their Nicaraguan birth certificates and copies of all documents they have submitted to immigration authorities in the past, including applications for political asylum and proof that they arrived in the United States before Dec. 1, 1995.

He also said that any Nicaraguan immigrant who receives a notice of deportation or an order to appear in immigration court should comply with the instructions without fail, because immigration judges are aware of the new law and will not deport those who meet the qualifications for residency.

The Nicaraguan Fraternity will provide bilingual assistance free of charge and also will help people practice answers to basic questions about the United States government that will be asked on their residency tests. Federal immigration officials expect to begin processing Nicaraguan residency cases in the next several months. Meanwhile, applicants can call the Fraternity at 703-836-8575.

"There is no reason this should cost anyone more than \$ 80, plus the cost of a medical exam and fingerprints," Gutierrez said. "People need to be patient and not get nervous, because they are not going to get deported."

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