

POLS LOOK TO EASE IMMIGRATION RULES

Daily News (New York)

September 16, 2003, Tuesday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2003 Daily News, L.P.

Section: SUBURBAN;

Length: 317 words

Byline: By SONI SANGHA DAILY NEWS WRITER

Body

There may be hope for families who don't make enough money to sponsor relatives for citizenship, immigrant advocates announced yesterday.

This week, Reps.

Anthony Weiner (D-Brooklyn) and Charles Rangel (D-Manhattan) will propose federal legislation to lower the annual income required to sponsor immigrants.

In 1996, a law was passed requiring families to make 125% of the poverty level if they wanted to bring a relative into the United States. Currently, a family of four has to make \$23,125 to sponsor a family. If the bill passes and becomes law, they will have to make \$18,400, the federal poverty level.

Opponents of the bill argue that higher income thresholds mean immigrants are less likely to wind up on welfare.

"The sponsor has to be able to assume the costs of shelter, food and health care," said David Ray, spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform. "If they can't, it will be a drain on federal funds."

Moises Perez, executive director of the Washington Heights-based community group Alianza Dominicana, disagreed, saying: "We're not seeing that immigrants are a burden across the country."

Instead, he said, under current restrictions, immigrant families have become disjointed.

Perez recalled that his mother immigrated from the Dominican Republic two years before he and his brothers could join her.

"The degree to which this law can reinforce the family ties that bind is tremendous," he said.

The bill faces an uphill battle. Opponents say a sluggish economy and the post-9/11 vigilance will make the federal government wary about relaxing immigration laws.

Still, Weiner is optimistic.

"There is always an element in Congress that is viscerally anti-immigration," said Weiner, who estimated that 75,000 families across the country would benefit from the legislation. "I think we're going to be able to find a coalition of support."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

POLS LOOK TO EASE IMMIGRATION RULES

Subject: LEGISLATION (91%); IMMIGRATION (90%); POOR POPULATION (90%); FAMILY (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (89%); IMMIGRATION LAW (89%); WELFARE BENEFITS (76%); POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS (76%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (67%)

Company: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (56%)

Organization: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (56%)

Person: ANTHONY D WEINER (77%); CHARLES B RANGEL (57%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (88%); UNITED STATES (93%); DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (77%)

Load-Date: September 16, 2003