

**THE NATION;**

## **A Grace Period For Illegal Aliens**

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### **Body**

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"Now they ask me for papers," said Jose Antonio Menendez, an **illegal alien** from El Salvador who has lived and worked in Houston since 1981. Mr. Menendez can no longer find a job, even though, like millions of other **aliens**, he can apply for legal status under the immigration law adopted in November. He can legally be employed while the Immigration and Naturalization Service decides whether he qualifies, and in any case, a provision authorizing fines of employers who hire **illegal aliens** does not go into effect until June 1.

Nevertheless, suits filed by immigrant rights groups in Houston, Phoenix and Sacramento say many employers are already dismissing **illegal aliens** or, more often, refusing to hire them, choosing to run no risk of fines that range up to \$10,000.

Last week the immigration service agreed to grant "blanket authority" for **illegal aliens** to work until Sept. 1, if they tell their employer that they expect to qualify for legal status. The service said it did so only to avoid the "administrative nightmare" of trying to issue up to five million temporary work permits while also determining which **aliens** were qualified for amnesty.

A spokesman for the group that filed the Sacramento suit called the agreement, which settled the suit, a victory. "We think this should reverse the trend of employers firing many of their workers to avoid sanctions," said Peter Schey, director of an immigrants group in Los Angeles.

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