

## **Immigration Fees Slashed For Eligible Salvadorans**

The Washington Post

May 18, 1991, Saturday, Final Edition

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**Section:** METRO; PAGE B5; NATIONAL NEWS, DC NEWS

**Length:** 442 words

**Byline:** Al Kamen, Washington Post Staff Writer

**Series:** Occasional

### **Body**

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The **Immigration** and Naturalization Service, under pressure from Congress and immigrant rights groups, has agreed to a substantial reduction in the processing **fees** it charges Salvadoran immigrants enrolling in a special 18-month amnesty program.

With the application deadline barely six weeks away, only about 60,000 of the estimated 300,000 to 500,000 **Salvadorans** in this country believed **eligible** have taken advantage of the Temporary Status Program, INS officials said yesterday.

Advocacy groups and congressional sponsors of the amnesty blame the INS for the low enrollment in the program, which gives **Salvadorans** legal resident status for 18 months and, most importantly, work permits. After that period, however, they would again be subject to deportation if the attorney general declines to extend the amnesty.

U.S. Rep. Joe Moakley (D-Mass.), one of the key sponsors of the program, told a congressional oversight subcommittee this week that high INS processing and work permit **fees** totaling \$ 380 for an individual and \$ 1,435 for a family of five -- dissuaded applicants, and said the agency failed to grant waivers for those who could not pay.

Moakley demanded that the INS lower the **fees**, and introduced a bill extending the deadline period for applications by four months, to Oct. 31.

INS officials said yesterday that a formula, which will go into effect next week, would charge \$ 75 a person and \$ 225 for a family of three or more. The agency would charge an additional \$ 60 for each six-month work permit. Those who have already paid will not get refunds.

INS Commissioner Gene McNary, testifying after Moakley, said that given the planned **fee** reductions, he did not feel an extension of the eligibility deadline was necessary. McNary said the low enrollment so far was not that troubling because the agency expected a rush of applicants as the deadline approaches.

The INS estimates that a total of about 100,000 to 150,000 **Salvadorans** eventually will enroll in the program, an agency spokesman said yesterday. As many as 50,000 Salvadoran immigrants are believed **eligible** in the Washington area, and nearly 11,000 have enrolled so far.

Despite the **fee** reductions, Moakley is going to continue to push for an extension in the enrollment deadline, his press secretary, Jim McGovern, said yesterday.

Congress intended to provide a six-month sign-up period, McGovern said, and the INS, through its actions, has "reduced that period by 4 1/2 months." McGovern said Moakley, chairman of the House Rules Committee, will likely attach the deadline extension amendment to a bill the Bush administration strongly supports.

## Graphic

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PHOTO, GENE MCNARY

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (92%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (90%); AMNESTY (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (89%); LICENSES & PERMITS (89%); DEPORTATION (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); LEGISLATION (78%); US CONGRESS (78%)

**Company:** IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (97%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (93%)

**Organization:** IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (97%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (93%); IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (97%); IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE (93%)

**Person:** JAMES P MCGOVERN (78%)

**Geographic:** UNITED STATES (92%)