



*Southern California Chapter*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA IMMIGRATION LAWYERS WELCOME PRESIDENT'S ACTION, CAUTION COMMUNITY AGAINST SCAMMERS**

LOS ANGELES, CA- The Southern California chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) welcomed President Obama's executive action which will offer some protections for vulnerable members of the community.

"This plan is a long time in coming," said AILA Chapter Chair Heather L. Poole. She continued, "As immigration attorneys, we see the results of our broken system every day and in the absence of Congressional action, the President had to act. While a lot of the details are still waiting to be filled in, we know that many of these changes will make a real impact."

Ms. Poole continued, "In our communities, we see families too afraid to come out of the shadows to start the process to fix their immigration paperwork or even walk down to the park with their children, worried that ICE vans will perform a random sweep and separate them forever from their family members who depend on them. We see permanent residents who are contributing to our economy's growth in the IT, financial, and professional services industries worried about their spouse's safety and the care of their U.S. citizen children when that spouse has to go abroad for months to complete part of the immigration process. We see college students who were brought to the US as young children by their parents who know no other land, no other language or culture besides being an "American" who have no

criminal backgrounds who are stuck – unable to use their education and contribute to the US economy in a variety of fields without continuing permission to stay lawfully in the U.S.”

This proposed plan has the potential to change all of this and bring some sense back to the immigration system.

Included in the far-ranging plan are some key items:

- Deferred Action for the parents of U.S. citizen and lawful permanent resident children who have no criminal background and have been residing in the US for at least five years. This new measure would provide temporary relief from removal for these individuals - keeping families together and providing work authorization that will lead to more taxes being paid and a boost to the local and national economy.
- Expansion of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to remove the age cap and move the continuous presence date up to January 1, 2010. DACA will now be granted for 3 years (including those with pending renewal applications).
- Allowing spouses and children of lawful permanent residents to apply for unlawful presence waivers from within the U.S. and ensuring appropriate standards for adjudicating those waivers.
- Enabling families of individuals trying to enlist in the armed forces to utilize parole in place to ensure legal status.
- Changing the procedures for adjustment of status to allow legal immigrants caught in the immigration quota backlogs to register their applications and thus begin the final step of the process.

The chapter is extremely concerned that many immigrants will be taken advantage of by notarios and unlicensed operators – immigration consultants, document preparers, and paralegals who see a money-making opportunity, despite the potential damage that can be done by giving the wrong legal advice and taking money out of the pockets of the most vulnerable when no relief is available.

Chapter Chair Heather L. Poole concluded, “As lawyers, we see the havoc wreaked by unlicensed notarios and immigration consultants who are practicing law without a license. Immigration law is a lot more complicated than the public thinks – it’s not about just filling out forms. Immigration law is unforgiving – one small mistake and your chances of relief can be destroyed forever. Stay away from these individuals and watch out for scams. The reality is that no new application forms are available yet and the guidelines that will determine eligibility are not yet finalized. There is nothing to apply for yet. Watch out for scammers who promise eligibility now. Don’t let someone ruin your chances for possible benefit; seek qualified counsel for these important decisions.”

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*About Southern California AILA:*

Founded in 1946, the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) is a national bar association of attorneys who practice and teach immigration law. AILA Member attorneys represent tens of thousands of

U.S. businesses and industries, foreign students, entertainers, athletes, and asylum seekers, often on a pro bono basis.

The Southern California Chapter represents over 1050 member attorneys in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties. Our chapter maintains close contact with the government officials who have an important impact on our clients' lives. Chapter meetings feature prominent guest speakers from the Departments of Homeland Security, State, Justice, and Labor, and the Chapter is active in liaison and advocacy efforts.