



Welfare Rule To Hit Public Housing

If a proposed rule succeeds and is eventually made final, thousands of legal and illegal immigrants could lose their public housing and Section 8 housing voucher privileges.

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services has decided to enforce a long-time policy against granting legal permanent resident status for anyone who might become a "public charge" -- e.g., someone likely to end up on welfare.

The proposal, open for public comment for 60 days and subject to change, would broaden the criteria the government uses to deny applications from immigrants.

It is part of the arsenal the Trump administration is applying to make it more difficult for immigrants to obtain green cards if they are poor or could become poor. And it would make it almost impossible for poor immigrants fleeing oppression to be granted admission to the country.

The DHS estimates the proposal would remove more than 324,000 people from public benefit rolls, saving the government about \$2 billion annually.

Officially, green card holders are eligible for public benefits, including housing, after five years in this country. Illegal immigrants are ineligible for most public benefits.

The current public charge policy allows certain applicants, based on age, education, assets and employment status, to receive some benefits.

But the guidelines for benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid have been relaxed in recent years to accommodate greater numbers of applicants. The new proposal would broaden criteria to exclude most safety net benefits, including housing.

DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen says the proposal would "implement a law passed by Congress intended to promote self-sufficiency and protect finite resources by ensuring that they are not likely to become burdens on American taxpayers."

Current guidelines say an immigrant is considered a public charge only if he or she is likely to depend "primarily" on government assistance, meaning for more than 50% of income. The new rule would lower the threshold

The more than 400-page proposal would upend the Clinton-era welfare reform strategy which says the only things that may be counted as welfare are cash assistance such as state benefits or the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Security Income programs and institutionalization for long-term care. All other non-cash benefits were exempted. That means anyone could receive public housing, food stamps, and Medicaid and still be considered self-sufficient. The new rule would end those exemptions.

Info: See the proposal at www.cdpublications.com/docs/9539

9/28/18 10:21 AM