

# UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION



United Press International

Hundreds of amnesty seekers lined up outside the Houston INS office Monday.

## Illegal aliens can apply by mail for amnesty

LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON — Swamped by last-minute applications for the amnesty program, the government announced Monday that it would allow illegal aliens to apply by mail, as long as the signed forms and application fees were postmarked by midnight Wednesday.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service, which administers the program, announced the mail-in procedure in response to fear that many people would not be able to apply in person by the May 4 deadline.

As the year-long program draws to a close, some INS legalization offices around the nation have been so crowded that many people have had to

stand in line for hours — and, in some cases, days.

However, the mail-in system is nothing new at the INS office in Salinas.

“Mail-ins have been accepted all along,” said Tom Maddry, the chief legalization officer for the center that serves Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

For a while, Maddry said the Los Angeles INS office only accepted applications by mail.

He acknowledged that not many illegal immigrants are aware of that option since most of the mail-ins his office receives are from attorneys and agencies who assist applicants with their paperwork.

For those who do choose the mail-in option, he suggests they certify the letter at the time it is sent.

“This way if the post office screws it up he (the applicant) has his receipt to show he put it in the mail during the time of validity,” Maddry said.

As of yesterday, the Salinas office had received more than 35,000 applications.

Although about 1,100 people were served yesterday, it wasn't the busiest one to date.

“We've had 1,100 people in here several times,” Maddry said.

He noted that agricultural workers continue to come in to file applications, apparently unaware they are under a different deadline.

Farm workers, who qualify under a separate program, have added to the crush because many do not know that their program runs until Nov. 30. As a result, some aliens in rural areas and those who were ill or otherwise unable to travel were in danger of missing the legalization opportunity.

“We are doing everything in our power to ensure that everyone who is eligible will be able to apply for this generous program,” INS spokesman Duke Austin said.

Immigrants who have lived in this country illegally since Jan. 1, 1982, except for brief absences, may apply. Individuals must pay a \$185 filing fee. Families are charged a maximum of \$420.

Applicants must not send

See AMNESTY page 2 ▶

## AMNESTY

▶ From page 1

their fees in cash or personal checks but should use certified checks or money orders.

At the Salinas office, official office hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. although Maddry said the center doesn't close until everyone has been seen. Yesterday the office closed at 8 p.m.

Through Sunday, 1,353,914 people had applied throughout the country, with a further 464,803 applying under the farm-worker program, the INS said.

Immigration activists reacted to the announcement with muted enthusiasm, saying that the INS was acting sensibly in allowing people to mail their applications, but they said the decision was too late to appreciably increase the number of applicants.

In Austin, Texas, Norma Plascencia Almanza of the National Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Forum called the new policy “another piece of information that muddies the water.” With only two days left, she said, “the reality is that most individuals will not get the word in time.”

Staff writer Laramie Trevino contributed to this report.

### inside

BUSINESS .....	12
CLASSIFIED .....	21-23
COMICS .....	19
CROSSWORD .....	23
DEATHS .....	11
EDITORIAL .....	24
FOOD .....	10
LIVING .....	4
MOVIES .....	18
SPORTS .....	13-16
TELEVISION .....	19

### forecast

Mostly fair tonight and sunny tomorrow. Lows around 40, highs in the 70s.

Details page 11.