

Long wait for green card gets shortened

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Tens of thousands of legal U.S. immigrants will receive permanent residency without having the required FBI clearance, the Bush administration said. The change affects a large number of the roughly 47,000 permanent residency applicants whose cases have been awaiting disposition at least six months solely because they lack the required FBI check, The Washington Post reported Tuesday. The delays have been called "the most pervasive" processing problem in the U.S. immigration system, said Prakash Khatri, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ombudsman. The change, announced in an internal memorandum Feb. 4, comes after years of criticism from Khatri, the Department of Homeland Security inspector general, congressional members and federal judges, who say the delays don't benefit either national security or immigrants. Critics blamed poor management and coordination between the FBI and the citizenship agency, as well as an inefficient system by which the FBI keeps more than 86 million investigative files. The change is a "step in the right direction for the government to see this name check has really been holding up thousands or tens of thousands of people unnecessarily," Cecilia D. Wang, senior staff counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union's immigrants' rights project, told the Post.

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