

## DRIVERS LICENCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA

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In some rare good news for immigrants, Governor Davis signed a law making drivers licenses available to undocumented immigrants living in California. Former California State law required that all driver's licence applicants provide a valid Social Security number and proof of legal presence in order to obtain a California Drivers Licence. The new law has eliminated the requirement of a Social Security number and proof of legal residence in order to obtain a California State Drivers Licence.

In the recent past, it was virtually impossible for anyone without a green card to obtain a permanent license. Proof of permanent status or a working visa was often required by the Social Security Administration before a social security number would be issued. Without the number, the DMV would not issue a drivers license. Now, immigrants in California can apply directly to DMV irregardless of their immigration status. Social Security numbers will still be unavailable to undocumented immigrants as this is governed by federal law.

The law will subject undocumented immigrants to the same training, proper testing and an opportunity to purchase auto insurance as those with social security numbers. This bill is said to improve public safety and accountability by maintaining current security standards, including thumbprints and other positive identification. It also will allow many undocumented immigrants, who presently drive without licenses or insurance, to get both, thus making it safer for everyone.

The law is set to take effect on January 1, 2004 unless revoked before that time. Several of the Republican candidates for governor have said that they will revoke the bill if they become governor.

It would be wise for any undocumented immigrants to take advantage of this new law and obtain drivers licenses as soon as possible after January 1 before the law is changed or revoked.

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