

Immigration misstep

OUR OPINION: AGENCY SHOULD MAKE AMENDS FOR WORK-PERMIT ERROR

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Mistakes and errors are inevitable, but what matters more is how the problem is rectified. This is the point of a lawsuit involving Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) and hundreds of Cuban refugees who have not been issued work permits within the 90 days required by law.

While CIS apparently has fixed the glitch for people currently applying for permits, many of those who applied earlier still do not have their work documents. Others who received permits late will have only a few months to use them before having to pay another \$180 to renew the permit for the next year.

In addition to repairing this glitch, CIS now should ensure that people still waiting for work permits get them promptly. Further, those delayed by the misstep should have their permit renewed for free next time. This is the least CIS should do considering that its mistake for months prevented more than 800 recently arrived Cubans, many struggling to begin new lives, from earning a living.

The lawsuit was filed in July by the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center. Olga Mayor, the named plaintiff, arrived last December and applied for a work permit in January. She still hasn't received it. Others without work permits, such as Mileidis González and Gilberto Cabrera, have had trouble paying rent and other expenses.

FIAC lawyers say many of the affected people began receiving work permits shortly after the lawsuit was filed. But hundreds of people still are waiting, some of them for more than 10 months for a document that by law should be issued within three months.

Work permits are critical for newly arrived immigrants. Jobs allow them to support their families and contribute to the tax rolls. CIS should fix the problem and make amends for any harm it has caused.