

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed H.R. 14535, the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1976. This legislation brings our immigration procedures for the Western Hemisphere into line with those for the Eastern Hemisphere. Among other things the enrolled bill would:

- apply the preference system currently applicable to Eastern Hemisphere immigrants to natives of countries of the Western Hemisphere (with minor modifications);
- apply the 20,000-per-country limit to countries of the Western Hemisphere;
- make Western Hemisphere immigrants eligible for adjustment of status to that of lawful permanent residents on an equal basis with Eastern Hemisphere immigrants;
- apply the labor certification requirements equally to immigrants native to both hemispheres; and
- provide that Cuban refugees covered under the Cuban Refugee Act of 1966 will not be charged to the Western Hemisphere quota (of 120,000 per year).

This legislation will also facilitate the reunification of Mexican American families by giving preference to Mexican nationals who are close relatives of United States citizens or lawful permanent residents, or who have needed job skills. I am concerned, however, about one aspect of the legislation which has the effect of reducing the legal immigration into this country from Mexico. Currently about 40,000 natives of Mexico legally immigrate to the United States each year. This legislation would cut that number in half.

The United States has a very special and historic relationship with our neighbor to the South. In view of this special status we have with the Mexican government and the Mexican people, I will submit legislation to the Congress in January to increase the immigration quotas for Mexicans desiring to come to the United States.

#