

## Hope for undocumented residents

By Yolanda Perdomo  
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Thursday night's announcement by President Barack Obama is expected to affect more than 500,000 people living in the shadows in Illinois. Illinois Public Radio's Yolanda Perdomo reports on one man's life.

"This is my yard where I keep all my construction trailers and scaffold and trucks. This is a mixer that mixes the mortar. Wheelbarrows and mud stands. Cinder blocks over here."

Behind a large industrial garage in Oak Lawn, Gerry shows me the tools of his trade. He points to dozens of old red bricks stacked high on a wooden pallet. He'll use them on a future job. He says people love reclaimed materials on their new homes.

"These are probably the best bricks to use for when you're building. The new bricks nowadays water can go through the bricks. These old bricks, not as much, you know."

Gerry has six employees but asked I not use his last name or his company's name. We couldn't meet at his job site because his employees don't know his status.

"Because you don't know how the American people are going to take you. I just started working for this guy. This is my second job for him and I didn't want people to come out and say 'oh my god he's an illegal immigrant and he shouldn't be working here.'"

With blond hair framing blue eyes and rosy cheeks, Gerry is almost never asked about his status. He came to the US from Ireland in the 1990s. Gerry married a US citizen and has a four year old son born here. But before he married, his visa expired. And that, according to his lawyers, makes Gerry ineligible for citizenship now.

Gerry's hopes now hang on President Obama's executive order, expected to reprieve the deportation of a possible five million undocumented parents of American born children.

Not everyone is happy with the move. A CBS/New York Times poll found 43% of those asked oppose the President's plan.

"If Republicans were going to pass immigration reform, and executive action poisons the well, then this is not a good way to do it," said Alex Nowrasteh with the Cato Institute, a conservative think tank. He says change should come from legislation, and not the president's pen.

"Almost all enforcement action and reforms to the legal immigration system such as extending guest worker visas or green cards can only be done through passing a law."

But President Obama has said he's doing what Congress failed to tackle. As his eyes well up, Gerry admits he's anxious. He says it would allow let him to leave the bricks behind to be a soccer coach and put to use his skills as a former semi pro player.

"My mother's been calling me. Three times today saying it's on the news. I hope something comes good of it. Parents all over the world will be so excited if their son can come home or their family can come home."

And Gerry adds that while having the freedom to change jobs is a privilege citizens, so is the freedom to travel to see family in the good times and the bad.

"My grandfather was here. Never missed a Thanksgiving for 17 years. He passed away two years ago. I couldn't go back to the funeral or anything. That's when it really hit home."

If the executive action doesn't include him, Gerry says he may take his family back to Ireland, a country with 11% unemployment and struggling to craft its own legislation for its growing immigrant population.