

MARCH/Varying Hopes for Immigration Amnesty

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of the chances for general amnesty. The proposed law would allow workers in the country for at least 90 days since 2000 to apply for residency and keep working. Their direct families would also be eligible.

"I have a lot of hope that it will happen," Sunnyside resident Martin Rios said. Rios is general secretary for the union that represents about 250 workers at the Chateau Ste. Michelle wineries in

Central Washington. It is the only United Farmworkers unit in Washington, Rodriguez said.

Organization radically improved wages and benefits at the wineries after workers signed a contract following a contentious boycott, Rios said. Both workers and the company wanted to keep themselves in business, Rios said.

"I think it will happen this year, because so many people need it," said Ramirez, the George worker.

Ignacia Diaz, another Yakima

fruit worker, said she also thinks the bill will pass soon. It would guarantee more job security for many whom she knows, Diaz said.

But Antonio Balderas — an announcer for Granger's KDNA-AM, "The Voice of the Farmworker" — offered a more moderate opinion of the amnesty legislation's prospects in Congress.

"Immigration politics are a mess," Balderas said in a brief radio interview at the park. He warned that some form of partial

amnesty seems more likely.

March organizers first estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 would attend. But they were pleased with the somewhat lower turnout, said Guadalupe Gamboa, the United Farmworkers' regional leader in Sunnyside.

The rally only begins an effort to pass the legislation and improve labor conditions, speakers said.

"We have to keep fighting for justice," Rodriguez said.