

Torn By Family Separation, Legal Immigrants Organize to Find a Voice on Capitol Hill

Unitefamilies.org was formed to change the immigration law that separates legal residents from their spouses and minor children still living outside the United States.

Washington, D.C. (PRWEB) April 5, 2005 -- Unitefamilies.org, an organized group of legal residents whose Web site can be found at <http://www.unitefamilies.org>, is working to change the immigration law that separates legal residents from their spouses and minor children living outside the United States.

In a letter to President Bush, the members state that current immigration law for legal immigrants is unfair and against American family values. They urge the president to deliver on his promise that he made during his 2000 campaign: "If we are a nation that believes in family values, we need to help husbands and wives and children of permanent residents be allowed to visit while the INS is handling their paperwork."

Many lawful permanent residents (green card holders) are currently living in the United States, separated from their families. These are mostly young families — a husband or wife, separated from their spouse and young child. They are waiting for their I-130 petitions (petition for relative) to be approved. The current waiting time is at least 5 years.

While they wait, their spouse and child are not allowed to enter the United States, even for a brief visit. The permanent residents, on the other hand, must reside predominantly in the United States. Otherwise they lose their permanent residency status.

These tax paying and law-abiding legal immigrants have organized a grassroots effort to find a voice on the hill. Their Web site is at <http://www.unitefamilies.org>.

The nucleus of Legal Permanent Residents' (LPR) is shattered due to separation from spouses and minor children because of the current immigration law. As it states in USC title 8 section 1153(a)(2), available visas are not to exceed 114,000 per year to the spouses and minor children of LPR. This numerical limitation coupled with the legendary INS backlog, is currently causing a waiting time of more than 5 years before a visa becomes available. And Congress is largely complicit in this immoral issue, the group says.

On March 16, 2005 Customs and Immigration Services director Eduardo Aguirre presented a report to the Congress, which showed a significant progress in reducing CIS backlog. However, statutory numerical limitations on available visas will undermine the efforts on reducing backlog.

Approximately 1.1 million applications were excluded from Mr. Eduardo's report due to the numerical limitation of available visas. This issue was addressed effectively when the V-Visa was introduced in 2000. Unfortunately, the term and restriction of the V-Visa is no longer effective as it expired in 2003, the group says.

Enacting V Visa will provide ample time for the U.S. Congress to evaluate proper immigration reform to overcome this complex issue. At the same time, it will relieve the separation of the families of LPRs. The V-Visa solution is an alternative to cope with such a sensitive issue. A similar and parallel solution exists for U.S. citizens by providing their relatives with the K-Visa, which currently allows their foreign spouse to come to the U.S. while USCIS processes their application.

Unitefamilies.org is a volunteer group and growing strongly. New members, mostly victims of unfair immigration laws, are joining this group every day.

This group reached 300 members in just a few months. Members are collectively writing to Congress to re-enact the V-Visa provision in the Immigration and Naturalization Act, to allow their spouse and minor children to stay in the US while USCIS processes their petition.

The V-Visa is similar to the current K-Visa, which is available to U.S. citizens to bring their foreign spouse or fiancée within 90 days. Unitefamilies.org feels the current immigration law is cruel and unfair for the immigrants, who worked hard to earn their residency in the United States. More details are available on group's forum: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/unitefamilies>.

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