



[www.llmlaw.com](http://www.llmlaw.com)

[immigration@llmlaw.com](mailto:immigration@llmlaw.com)

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### **USCIS Helps Expose Marriage Fraud Ring**

22 individuals involved in a marriage and immigration fraud scheme were arrested in September as part of a three-year law enforcement task force operation in the Washington, D.C. area. The defendants are alleged to have arranged marriages between aliens seeking immigration benefits and United States citizens willing to enter into sham marriages in exchange for money.

The arrests were a result of the efforts of a task force of federal and local agencies including: USCIS, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Arlington and Fairfax County (VA) Police Departments, the Internal Revenue Service and the Departments of State and Commerce. Aliens who participated in this fraud scheme were primarily from Ghana and generally paid large fees.

When USCIS employees detect suspect patterns of immigration fraud, they refer the case to ICE to determine whether the case should be pursued criminally.

### **September 22, 2006 USCIS to Expand Premium Processing Service**

USCIS announced the addition of three new categories to the Premium Processing Service, which allows U.S. businesses to pay a \$1,000 Premium Processing fee in exchange for 15-calendar-day processing of their case. Starting on September 25, 2006, USCIS began accepting Premium Processing requests for Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker involving the visa categories: EB-1, EB-2, and EB-3.

### **September 18, 2006 DHS Announces Termination of the Designation of Liberia for Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**

The designation will remain in effect through September 30, 2007. Once the TPS designation is no longer in effect on October 1, 2007, former TPS beneficiaries return to the same immigration status they maintained before registering for TPS (unless that status has since expired or been terminated), or to any other status they may have acquired while registered for TPS.

**September 14, 2006 DHS Announces 12-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Nationals of Burundi until November 2, 2007.**

Under this extension, those who have already been granted TPS are eligible to live and work in the United States for an additional 12 months and continue to maintain their status.

**If You Plan on Traveling Outside of the U.S.**

While permanent residence normally means the ability to travel freely outside the U.S. and return, there are limitations. Lengthy absences can lead to abandonment and loss of permanent residence status, or delayed eligibility for naturalization. Absence for a year or more can be particularly problematic. You may be able to reduce the risk of abandonment by filing for a “reentry permit,” using Form I-131, Application for Travel Document, before you depart. Under more limited circumstances, you may be able to protect your eligibility for naturalization by filing a Form N-470, Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes, before you depart. Criminal convictions can trigger special inadmissibility grounds when you travel internationally. If you have criminal convictions, you should carefully consider the ramifications before you travel.

**August 11, 2006 Parole for Cuban Medical Personnel in Third Countries**

Department of Homeland Security announced that it would now allow certain Cuban medical personnel in third countries (that is, not in Cuba or the United States) to apply for parole at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.