

**Washington, D.C.** - Congressman David Price (D-NC) today applauded action by the Department of Homeland Security to make visas available to immigrants who are victims of domestic violence in the United States. Price, who chairs the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, has been urging the department to issue the needed "U Visa" regulations for months.

Undocumented immigrants often do not report abuse committed against them for fear of deportation, which can leave them vulnerable to further abuse and threats to their lives. To remedy this situation, Congress passed legislation in 2000 to give them protected status, but neither U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services nor its predecessor agency, the INS, had ever issued regulations to implement the law. Now, however, these crime victims are eligible for a U Visa, which grants temporary legal status to such victims who provide information that helps law enforcement prosecute their abusers.

Since assuming the role of chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee in January, Price has been urging the department to make this new visa available as soon as possible. In a March committee hearing, Price prodded the Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to move forward on implementation of this critical program that had been delayed for seven years after the visa was authorized by Congress.

And in the Homeland Security funding bill (H.R. 2638) the House passed in June, Price inserted language insisting upon implementation of the U Visa program, even threatening to withhold funds for construction of a new Department headquarters facility until the visa was made available. That bill now awaits action by a joint House-Senate conference committee.

From the official report accompanying the bill ( [House Report 110-181](#) ):

"The Committee continues to be disappointed with the lack of progress in publishing regulations to allow for immigration benefit applications under the U-Visa authorities enacted in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Given that this program is designed to provide relief for immigrant victims of domestic violence and other heinous crimes, it is unacceptable that it has taken the Administration more than six years to promulgate this regulation. The Committee encourages the Administration in the strongest possible terms to use its authority to immediately publish the pending U-Visa rule in an interim final form. To encourage speedy progress on this

issue, the Committee has withheld from obligation any funds for the Department's headquarters projects until the U- Visa rule is published."

Price expressed relief that the rules for the new U Visa were finally released.

"This is good news for victims of domestic violence and for their tireless advocates who have been working to make the U Visa a reality," Price said. "Safety and justice for crime victims should never take a back seat to a victim's fear of deportation. This new visa program upholds the right priorities for a compassionate society."

Victims' advocates also applauded today's news and praised Congressman Price for his work. A press release from Legal Momentum, the nation's oldest legal advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the rights of women and girls, "commends Congressman David Price (D-NC) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) who were instrumental in encouraging the Department of Homeland Security to release the regulations."

Leslye Orloff, director of Legal Momentum's Immigrant Women Program, said, "These regulations make it possible for our most vulnerable immigrants to finally have the opportunity to apply for a status that should have been available years ago."

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