

UniteFamilies

a movement to unite lawful US permanent residents with their families

Volume 1, Issue 1—December 2005

In This Issue

S. 1919	1
PR Firm Hired	1
Newspaper Articles	1
Meetings with Lawmakers	2
Next Steps	3
Wedding Bells	3

It is with great pleasure that we, *UniteFamilies.org*, bring you our first monthly newsletter. Through this newsletter, we hope to update our members and supporters on our activities and the status of legislation related to the unification of families of lawful permanent residents.

We wish our members a happy new year. We wish that 2006 be the year when permanent residents are united with their immediate family.

New Bill Introduced—S. 1919

Many of you are aware that *UniteFamilies.org* has been advocating strongly for the passage of H.R. 1823. This bill would allow lawful permanent residents (LPRs, or green card holders) to be united with their spouses and minor children in the U.S. while the immigration process takes its course.

S. 1919 reclassifies spouses and children as immediate relatives

Recently, a new bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate that also addresses family unification but offers a different solution to the problem. On October 25, Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE) introduced S. 1919, which reclassifies spouses and minor children of LPRs as im-

mediate relatives and exempts them from the family immigration cap. In other words, it removes the current annual numerical limit on the number of immigrant visas available to spouses and children of LPRs. More information on this bill can be found in the Library of Congress website (<http://thomas.loc.gov>).

We strongly support S. 1919 as it promises a real solution to the family separation problem. We encourage all of you to email, call or write to your Senators and request their co-sponsorship of S. 1919.

PR Firm Hired

In late October, we hired Crosby-Volmer International Communications (<http://www.crosbyvolmer.com>) to develop and implement a public relations program. The objective was to raise awareness of the family separation issue among the American public and members of Congress. Crosby-Volmer has prepared a press kit and is contacting various ethnic organizations and newspapers. Several newspapers have shown keen interest in covering the issue.

Rob Volmer, co-founder and president of Crosby-Volmer, prepared and conducted two media training sessions for the core volunteers. Core volunteers learned how to navigate TV, radio, and newspaper interviews in these highly successful sessions.

Newspaper Articles

Due to the tireless efforts of our core volunteer Gaurav Negi, we were able to secure coverage of the family separation issue in the *San Jose*

Mercury News and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. These are prominent newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The article in the San Jose Mercury News was written by reporter Truong Phuoc Khánh and was published on the front page on November 14. It was syndicated and appeared in various *Knight Ridder* web properties throughout the country.

Articles in Mercury News, Chronicle, and India West

A month later, the San Francisco Chronicle published an article written by their reporter Cicero Estrella, a permanent resident himself.

Earlier this month, Viji Sundaram of *India West* contacted us through our website. *India West* is a weekly newspaper serving the Asian Indian community in the Bay Area.

We thank Khánh, Estrella and Sundaram for researching the family separation issue and writing the articles.

Each of the articles featured interviews with several of our members. Their heartbreaking stories of lengthy separation will go a long way in helping the public understand our predicament. We thank those who stepped forward to share their stories.

We have linked these articles in the News section of our website (<http://unitefamilies.org/news>).

We are working with journalists in other newspapers and expect more articles to appear shortly. We urge our members to respond to requests for interviews.

Call to Action

Atlanta Latino is interested in interviewing Hispanic members who reside in Georgia for an article they are researching. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* is working on an article as well.

If you reside in Georgia, please contact us by email right away (info@unitefamilies.org).

Meetings with Lawmakers

Many *UniteFamilies.org* volunteers work actively on contacting the offices of members of the House and Senate. Here is a sample of meetings that we have arranged in the last several months:

- A group of volunteers met George Fishman, aide to Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI-5), Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, last August. The presentation slideset is on our website (<http://unitefamilies.org/action/sensenbrenner.pdf>).
- Also in August, Amir Riahi met his Congressman Jeff Miller (R-FL-1).
- Several volunteers led by Kate Atanasova met Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) last September. We highlighted the inherent bias in the immigration law against U.S. citizens and permanent residents.
- On December 2, Ricardo Lu and Amir Riahi met with Congressman Jim Cooper's (R-TN-5) aides.

Our volunteers are working on finalizing meetings with several other Congresspersons and Senators.

Call to Action

It is critical for lawmakers to hear from their affected constituents. The more constituents they hear from, the more likely they will act to fix the problem. There is no adverse consequence in contacting a lawmaker.

When attempting to arrange a meeting with a lawmaker, persistence pays off. A single letter or phone call usually does not get their attention. In our experience, repeated attempts to contact our Congresspersons and Senators result in meetings.

We can help with the presentation materials and meeting preparation. However, you need to take the initiative to contact your lawmaker.

Next Steps

As we head into the new year and the second session of the 109th Congress, we need to focus even more attention on this problem. Congress is contemplating immigration reform next February. We need a fix to be included in any legislation passed next year.

We need our members to:

- *Donate generously.* We are critically short of funds and cannot renew our contract with Crosby-Volmer. You can donate to *UniteFamilies.org* by writing us a check or by PayPal; the instructions are on our website (<http://unitefamilies.org/action/donate.html>).¹

Consider this as an investment—the time and money saved in avoiding frequent travel to

be united with your spouse and children will more than compensate the donation.

- *Get involved.* Nothing is going to happen to fix our problem until each one of us plays a more active role. Write to your Congressperson and Senators. Write again and request a meeting. Call their offices and ask them to support H.R. 1823 or S. 1919. Write to your local newspaper, radio and TV stations requesting an article or segment highlighting our problem. Ask your spouse to join our Yahoogroup. Every action by every member counts.

Wedding Bells

We conclude this issue of our newsletter by wishing one of our most active volunteers, Gaurav Negi, and his wife Rohina Rawat, all the best as they start a new family. Their marriage took place on December 10th in DehraDun, India. As some of you know, Gaurav and Rohina are directly affected by the family separation issue; Rohina will not be able to join Gaurav in the U.S. since he is a lawful permanent resident. Let us carry their message of true love and family values to all people and policy-makers in the U.S.

This newsletter was prepared by Ajit Natarajan and Alex Maslov.

UniteFamilies.org,
P.O. Box 404,
Elmore, OH 43416-0404
info@unitefamilies.org

<http://unitefamilies.org>

© 2005, *UniteFamilies.org*

¹We are *not* a 501(c)(3) registered charity, so donations are *not* tax deductible. Accounts of donations received are tabulated in the database section of our Yahoo group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/unitefamilies>).