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FRANK PALLONE, JR.
6TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3006

November 16, 2007

REPLY TO:

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Richard Sloan, Chief
Regulatory Management Division
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20529

RE: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2005-0030

Dear Mr. Sloan:

I am writing to express my concerns on a proposed rule for special immigrant (SR/SD) and nonimmigrant (R-1) religious worker visa classifications. Many religious organizations in the United States may be adversely affected if the changes are enacted.

Combating immigration fraud is an important governmental responsibility and I do want to recognize your work in acknowledging the need of protections against fraudulent uses of the religious worker visa.

However, I have specific concerns regarding the terminology you have used in defining "religious occupations." The word choice you have picked would not permit fair assessments of petitions by Hindu organizations. The functionalities of Hindu occupations are vastly different than other traditional religions. For example, many of the jobs in the Hindu religion require construction and preservation of Hindu temples, and there is some concern in the Hindu community that the skills needed for this necessary work may not fit into your new definitions.

In addition, many organizations have expressed concern over the one-year review requirement. Most non-profit religious organizations rely on donations to do their good work for society. They will not have the resources for the administrative costs associated with such frequent reviews. It is important to also point out the delays currently in place at the USCIS. I believe this proposed rule change would place a heavy and unnecessary burden on both sides.

I respectfully request that any final rules for the R-1 religious worker visa help resolve some of these issues. Thank you for your consideration and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress

cc: Emilio T. Gonzalez, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services