

Immigration Woes, Part One

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Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Today after three years of frustration my wife received her VISA.

Before starting this odyssey, I thought people who came to the USA from Mexico illegally were just too lazy to go through the immigration process. Now I know better!

It can take years to process the paperwork, and thousands of dollars. No wonder people sneak into the land of opportunity.

My wife and I were determined to complete the process legally. Who wants to live like a fugitive?

We had to put in our paperwork three times, because it kept getting "lost". Finally, with the assistance of my Congressman we managed to get the process going. Even with their help, it took over 18 months.

Here're some things to keep in mind that'll help make your journey easier.

1. If the person coming to the US has been caught illegally in the "States" then it's an entirely different ball game.
 - a. Call a lawyer and expect to spend a lot of time and money.
 - b. From talking to several people in Ciudad Juarez, the US Government will let them in eventually. Expect to spend an additional six months to 10 years as "punishment" for the illegal entry to the US.
2. If either party has any kind of criminal record, see number one above.
3. For the rest of us, the operative phrase is follow up. Every time you communicate with the US Government do two things:
 - a. Document (keep copies of everything).
 - b. Follow up in two to three weeks; make them commit to giving you an update. Get names and times.
4. Do not be afraid to involve your elected officials. Every one told me that it would cause problems, but it actually made things easier. Without the intervention of my elected officials my wife would still be sitting in Mexico. Just be professional.
5. Follow directions and fill out each form completely, don't get ahead of them. Bureaucrats hate it when they can't call the shots. For instance, it took almost seven months to get two forms filled out when we were dealing with the Nation Visa Center (NVC). Both could have, and should have been filled out at the same time.
6. Do not procrastinate! No where in the immigration process will you find a complete explanation of the process. For example, out of the blue we were informed we needed a Mexican passport for my wife. Immediate action limited the delay caused by obtaining this document.

In order to shed some light on this process, I have decided to document the journey my wife and I suffered through. Sadly, we were not alone. Almost everyone I talked to in Ciudad. Juarez had experienced separations of two years or more. Even applicants who followed directions and had no criminal liabilities had lengthy separations.

In part two we'll discuss border crossings, immigration forms and starting the approval process. Part three will center on the delaying tactics of the National Visa Center. In part four we shed some light on what happens at the consulate. Please keep in mind this is based on first hand knowledge of the process, including the interview process at the US Consulate in Ciudad Juarez. Secure Publications, is a San Antonio Texas publishing company specializing in "How To" books and special reports designed to enhance our quality of life.

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