

State and Local

Lawyer: Laws could make foreign student visas scarce

By Olivier Uytendaele
Staff Writer

The maze of paperwork and waiting lists foreign students must deal with to live and work in this country is growing ever more complex, restrictive and time-consuming, an immigration lawyer said Friday at Texas A&M.

Dallas attorney Samuel M. Tidwell warned foreign students that "massive proposed changes" in immigration laws and an increasingly hostile attitude on the part of immigration officials will make it harder for aliens to get work permission and permanent residency.

If passed by Congress, the legislation would take effect late this year or early next year, Tidwell said.

Among other things, the new law would make it harder to get the coveted H-1 temporary visa, which allows a foreign professional to work and attend school, Tidwell said.

In the past, the courts have granted the H-1 visa to professionals in a wide variety of fields, he said. But the proposed legislation nar-

rowly defines the term "professional," listing 10 specialized fields such as engineering, mathematics and the physical sciences that a student must pursue to be eligible for the H-1.

Even for aliens in the approved fields, the proposed law would withhold the H-1 from any individual who couldn't present proof of the following qualifications:

- Five years of professional experience;
- Achievement recognized by experts in the field;
- Published works;
- An offer of employment with a prestigious firm or acceptance into an accredited graduate program.

Licensing is another criterion the Immigration and Naturalization Service is using to bar aliens from getting the H-1 visa, Tidwell said.

Beginning about a year and a half ago, INS began requiring that aliens be licensed in such fields as veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture and civil and electrical engineering, he said.

Under the proposed legislation,

an unlicensed alien can get an H-1 visa, but only for a year, he said. By then, the individual must have a license or lose the visa.

INS also is making it harder for a private company to hire an alien, he said. A company that wants to hire an alien must prove that it could not hire a qualified American for the job.

On-campus employment is granted to foreign students without INS approval, Tidwell said. But most types of temporary visas don't allow students to be employed off campus.

Besides the added restrictions on H-1 visas, the waiting list for permanent residency visas is growing, Tidwell said.

Tidwell estimates that a foreign professional applying for a permanent residence visa today is in for a 10-year wait.

The easiest way to gain permanent residency is to marry an American citizen, Tidwell said. But since the INS is aware of this, there are special obstacles for people who want to get a green card via marriage.

The INS estimates that 30 percent to 50 percent of all petitions filed based on marriage are fraudulent, he said.

And INS has special methods for detecting phony marriages, he said.

"They (the INS) will separate the husband and wife and ask a series of questions — what color is the toilet paper in the bathroom, which side of the bed do you sleep in, when was the last time your husband fixed you dinner," Tidwell said.

It will sometimes go so far as to make surprise bed checks on the couple, he said.

"They'll come out at 6 o'clock in the morning . . . knock on the door, look and see if hubby and wife are there, look in the closet and see if her shoes are there, his shoes are there, talk to the neighbors," he said.

Under the proposed legislation, bed-check investigations would be scaled down, Tidwell said. Instead, an alien married to a U.S. citizen would be granted a two-year provisional visa. At the end of the two years, the couple would have to prove they were still married.



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In Advance

College Bowl registration to continue through Friday

By Catherine Vincent
Reporter

College Bowl at Texas A&M will begin its eighth year of trivia tournaments this fall with A&M hoping to field another regional championship team.

College Bowl is a group of students sponsored by the Association of College Unions International who compete in tournaments, answering questions on such topics as current events, literature, science and entertainment.

"The tournament is like the old quiz shows of the '60s," says B.J. O'Rourke, chairman of College Bowl.

The questions, authenticated by Time magazine for validity and accuracy, are a little harder than Trivial Pursuit, O'Rourke says. Points are awarded according to the difficulty of the question.

Tournaments are held at 6 p.m. every Wednesday from Oct. 1 through the finals on Nov. 20. The winning team from A&M will compete in the regional finals at North Texas State University in February. Last year the A&M team won regionals and placed fifth nationally.

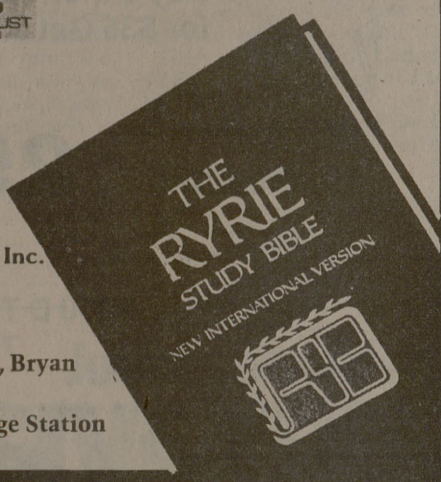
Registration forms are available in 201 Memorial Student Center through Friday.

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