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October 26, 2020

Re: Proposed Revision to the I Visa Program for Representatives of Foreign Media, RIN 1653-AA78/Docket No. ICEB-2019-006

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) opposes proposed changes by the DHS, which would require foreign correspondents to renew their I visa every 240 days. This unnecessary and unexplained change gives the U.S. government an easy tool to restrict foreign journalists whose work they may deem unfavorable, and other governments leeway for intimidation or physical violence. It is also unclear how a possible extension is reached and what happens after the extension period has elapsed.

The proposal cites its motivation "to encourage program compliance, reduce fraud, and enhance national security." Yet, the number of I visas issued annually is only 11,000, and there has not been any evidence of significant abuse that would justify a restriction on the media.

Several members of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists have feared this may inhibit their reporting because they depend on the I visa to do their job.

Foreign news correspondents commonly remain for multiple years, a necessary part of an individual journalists process to better understand the United Nations and U.S. organizations to provide fair and accurate coverage to global readers, listeners, and viewers.



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NAHJ.org