

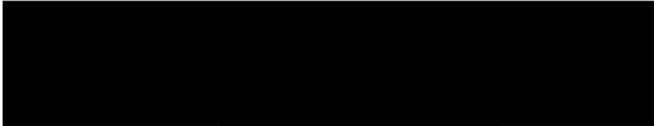
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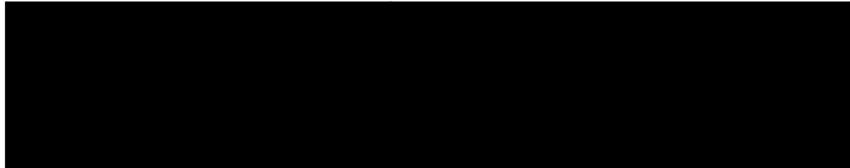


FILE: [REDACTED]
EAC 05 254 52110

Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date: FEB 15 2008

IN RE: Petitioner: [REDACTED]



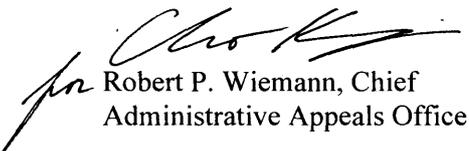
PETITION: Petition for Immigrant Abused Spouse Pursuant to Section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.


Robert P. Wiemann, Chief
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director, Vermont Service Center, denied the immigrant visa petition. On appeal, the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) remanded the matter for further action. The matter is now before the AAO upon certification of the director's subsequent, adverse decision. The decision of the director will be affirmed and the petition will be denied.

The petitioner seeks immigrant classification pursuant to section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the *Immigration and Nationality Act* ("the Act"), 8 U.S.C. § 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii), as an alien battered or subjected to extreme cruelty by a United States citizen.

Section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Act provides that an alien who is the spouse of a United States citizen may self-petition for immigrant classification if the alien demonstrates that he or she entered into the marriage with the United States citizen spouse in good faith and that during the marriage, the alien or a child of the alien was battered or subjected to extreme cruelty perpetrated by the alien's spouse. In addition, the alien must show that he or she is eligible to be classified as an immediate relative under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) of the Act, resided with the abusive spouse, and is a person of good moral character. Section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii)(II) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1154(a)(1)(A)(iii)(II).

Section 204(a)(1)(J) of the Act states, in pertinent part:

In acting on petitions filed under clause (iii) or (iv) of subparagraph (A) or clause (ii) or (iii) of subparagraph (B), or in making determinations under subparagraphs (C) and (D), the [Secretary of Homeland Security] shall consider any credible evidence relevant to the petition. The determination of what evidence is credible and the weight to be given that evidence shall be within the sole discretion of the [Secretary of Homeland Security].

In this case, the director initially denied the petition on January 24, 2006, finding that the petitioner failed to establish that she had a qualifying relationship as the spouse of a United States citizen. In our August 9, 2006 decision on appeal, we concurred with the director's determination and further found that the petitioner failed to establish a connection between the claimed abuse and the termination of her marriage, as well as that her marriage was recognized by competent authorities. However, we remanded the petition for issuance of a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID) in compliance with the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.2(c)(3)(ii). Upon remand, the director issued a NOID on September 13, 2006, which informed the petitioner of the deficiencies in the record and afforded her the opportunity to establish the requisite qualifying relationship, including evidence of the connection between the claimed abuse and the termination of her marriage and a marriage certificate recognized by competent authorities. The petitioner failed to respond to the director's NOID. Accordingly, the director denied the petition on January 4, 2007, based on the grounds cited in the NOID. The director certified her decision to the AAO for review and notified the petitioner that she could submit a brief to the AAO within 30 days of service of the director's decision. To date, the AAO has received nothing further from the petitioner. Accordingly, the record is considered to be complete as it now stands.

Upon review, we concur with the director's determination. The relevant evidence submitted below was

discussed in the previous decision of the AAO, which is incorporated here by reference. The petitioner has submitted no further brief or evidence since the issuance of that decision. Accordingly, as the petitioner was divorced for more than two years at the time of filing, failed to establish a connection between the termination of her marriage and the claimed abuse, and failed to establish that her marriage certificate was recognized, she has not established that she had a qualifying relationship as the spouse of a United States citizen. Beyond the decision of the director and our previous decision, we additionally find that the petitioner has also failed to establish that she was eligible for immigrant classification based upon that relationship. Consequently, the petitioner is ineligible for immigrant classification under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Act and her petition must be denied.

An application or petition that fails to comply with the technical requirements of the law may be denied by the AAO even if the Service Center or the AAO does not identify all of the grounds for denial in the initial decision. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc. v. United States*, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1025, 1043 (E.D. Cal. 2001), *aff'd*, 345 F.3d 683 (9th Cir. 2003). The AAO maintains plenary power to review each appeal or certification on a *de novo* basis. 5 U.S.C. § 557(b) ("On appeal from or review of the initial decision, the agency has all the powers which it would have in making the initial decision except as it may limit the issues on notice or by rule."); *see also, Janka v. U.S. Dept. of Transp., NTSB*, 925 F.2d 1147, 1149 (9th Cir. 1991). The AAO's *de novo* authority has been long recognized by the federal courts. *See, e.g. Dor v. INS*, 891 F.2d 997, 1002 n. 9 (2d Cir. 1989).

The petition will be denied for the above stated reasons, with each considered as an independent and alternative basis for denial. In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has not been met. Accordingly, the January 4, 2007 decision of the director is affirmed and the petition is denied.

ORDER: The director's decision of January 4, 2007 is affirmed. The petition is denied.