U.S. Department of Justice

Immigration and Naturalization Service

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS
425 Eye Street N.W.
ULLB, 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20536

[redacted]

Public Copy

File: [redacted] Office: Texas Service Center Date: JUL 30 2001

IN RE: Petitioner: [redacted]
Beneficiary:

Petition: Petition for Special Immigrant Religious Worker Pursuant to Section 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the "Act"), 8 U.S.C. 1153(b)(4), as described at Section 101(a)(27)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(27)(C)

IN BEHALF OF PETITIONER: [redacted] Identifying data deleted to prevent clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy

INSTRUCTIONS:
This is the decision in your case. All documents have been returned to the office which originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or the analysis used in reaching the decision was inconsistent with the information provided or with precedent decisions, you may file a motion to reconsider. Such a motion must state the reasons for reconsideration and be supported by any pertinent precedent decisions. Any motion to reconsider must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider, as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.5(a)(1)(i).

If you have new or additional information which you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reopen. Such a motion must state the new facts to be proved at the reopened proceeding and be supported by affidavits or other documentary evidence. Any motion to reopen must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reopen, except that failure to file before this period expires may be excused in the discretion of the Service where it is demonstrated that the delay was reasonable and beyond the control of the applicant or petitioner. Id.

Any motion must be filed with the office which originally decided your case along with a fee of $110 as required under 8 C.F.R. 103.7.

FOR THE ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER,
EXAMINATIONS

Myla L. Rosenberg
for Robert P. Wiemann, Acting Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The immigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, Texas Service Center, who certified the decision to the Associate Commissioner for Examinations for review. The decision of the center director will be affirmed.

The petitioner is the headquarters of a religious organization. It seeks classification of the beneficiary as a special immigrant religious worker pursuant to section 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the "Act"), 8 U.S.C. 1153(b)(4), in order to continue to employ him as a computer systems analyst at an annual salary of $33,420.

The record reflects that the petitioner has employed the beneficiary as a systems analyst since October 1996 as a temporary worker in H1-B classification. The center director denied the petition on the grounds that the proposed position was not a qualifying religious occupation.

In the Notice of Certification, the director afforded the petitioner thirty-days in which to supplement the record. The petitioner did not submit a brief or any additional information in response to the notice and the record will be considered complete as presently constituted.

To establish eligibility for special immigrant classification, the petitioner must establish that the specific position that it is offering qualifies as a religious occupation as defined in these proceedings. The statute is silent on what constitutes a "religious occupation" and the regulation states only that it is an activity relating to a traditional religious function. 8 C.F.R. 204.5(m)(2). The regulation does not define the term "traditional religious function" and instead provides a brief list of examples. The list reveals that not all employees of a religious organization are considered to be engaged in a religious occupation for the purpose of special immigrant classification. The regulation states that positions such as cantor, missionary, or religious instructor are examples of qualifying religious occupations. Persons in such positions must complete prescribed courses of training established by the governing body of the denomination and their services are directly related to the creed and practice of the religion. The regulation reflects that nonqualifying positions are those whose duties are primarily administrative or secular in nature. Persons in such positions must be qualified in their occupation, but they require no specific religious training or theological education.

The Service therefore interprets the term "traditional religious function" to require a demonstration that the duties of the position are directly related to the creed and practices of the denomination, that specific prescribed religious training or theological education is required, that the position is defined and recognized by the governing body of the denomination, and that the

position is traditionally a permanent, full-time, salaried occupation within the denomination.

On review of the record, it is clear that the proposed position of computer systems analyst is an entirely secular function and is not qualifying for special immigrant religious worker classification within the meaning of section 203(b)(4) of the Act.

ORDER: The center director's decision of December 30, 2000 is affirmed; the petition is denied.