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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of Administrative Appeals MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



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FILE: [REDACTED]
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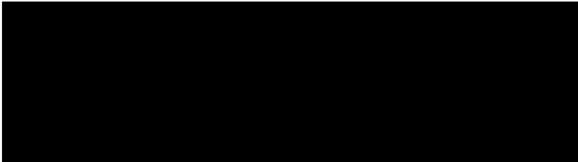
OFFICE: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

DATE: MAR 29 2010

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Temporary Protected Status under Section 244 of the
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1254

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:



INSTRUCTIONS:

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

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. Please refer to 8 C.F.R. § 103.5 for the specific requirements. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$585. Any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen, as required by 8 C.F.R. §103.5(a)(1)(i).

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The applicant's Temporary Protected Status was withdrawn by the Director, Vermont Service Center. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The applicant is a native and citizen of El Salvador who is seeking Temporary Protected Status (TPS) under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1254.

The director withdrew the applicant's TPS because he had been convicted of a felony in the United States.

On appeal, counsel asserts that the applicant's conviction is not a felony because New Jersey does not classify crimes as felonies or misdemeanors.

The director may withdraw the status of an alien granted TPS under section 244 of the Act at any time if it is determined that the alien was not in fact eligible at the time such status was granted, or at any time thereafter becomes ineligible for such status. Section 244(c)(3)(A) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 244.14(a)(1).

An alien shall not be eligible for temporary protected status if the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security finds that the alien has been convicted of any felony or two or more misdemeanors committed in the United States. Section 244(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 244.4(a).

"Felony" means a crime committed in the United States punishable by imprisonment for a term of more than one year, regardless of the term such alien actually served, if any, except when the offense is defined by the state as a misdemeanor, and the sentence actually imposed is one year or less, regardless of the term such alien actually served. Under this exception, for purposes of section 244 of the Act, the crime shall be treated as a misdemeanor. 8 C.F.R. § 244.1.

In response to a Notice of Intent to Withdraw TPS issued on June 15, 2009, the applicant submitted the requested court disposition from the Hudson County Criminal Court of New Jersey, which reflects that on February 21, 2008, the applicant was arrested for unlawful possession of a weapon, a violation of NJS section 2C:39-5b, a crime of the third degree. On January 15, 2009, the applicant pled guilty to this offense. [REDACTED]

On appeal, counsel asserts that because New Jersey law, which is controlling, defines unlawful possession of a weapon, as a crime in the third degree, the charge cannot be considered a felony.

According to New Jersey sentencing guidelines, a person convicted of a crime of the third degree may be imprisoned for three to five years. See N.J.S. section 2C: 43-6(a)(3).

Section 101(a)(48)(A) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(48)(A), defines the term "conviction:"

(48)(A) The term "conviction" means, with respect to an alien, a formal judgment of guilt of the alien entered by a court or, if adjudication of guilt has been withheld, where --

(i) a judge or jury has found the alien guilty or the alien has entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere or has admitted sufficient facts to warrant a finding of guilt, and

(ii) the judge has ordered some form of punishment, penalty, or restraint on the alien's liberty to be imposed.

(B) Any reference to a term of imprisonment or a sentence with respect to an offense is deemed to include the period of incarceration or confinement ordered by a court of law regardless of any suspension of the imposition or execution of that imprisonment or sentence in whole or in part.

The applicant entered a plea of guilty to violating NJS section 2C:39-5b, and the judge ordered some form of punishment or penalty (probation for 2 years, 50 hours of community service, random drug monitoring). The applicant, therefore, had been convicted within the meaning of section 101(a)(48)(A) of the Act, whether the offense is defined a crime, a traffic infraction, or a violation. Federal immigration laws should be applied uniformly, without regard to the nuances of state law. *See Ye v. INS*, 214 F.3d 1128, 1132 (9th Cir. 2000); *Burr v. INS*, 350 F.2d 87, 90 (9th Cir. 1965). Thus, whether a particular offense under state law constitutes a "felony" for immigration purposes is strictly a matter of federal law. *See Franklin v. INS*, 72 F.3d 571 (8th Cir. 1995); *Cabral v. INS*, 15 F.3d 193, 196 n.5 (1st Cir. 1994). While we must look to relevant state law in order to determine whether the statutory elements of a specific offense satisfy the regulatory definition of "felony," the legal nomenclature employed by a particular state to classify an offense or the consequences a state chooses to place on an offense in its own courts under its own laws does not control the consequences given to the offense in a federal immigration proceeding. *See Yazdchi v. INS*, 878 F.2d 166, 167 (5th Cir. 1989); *Babouris V. Esperdy*, 269 F.2d 621, 623 (2d Cir. 1959); *United States v. Flores-Rodriguez*, 237 F.2d 405,409 (2d Cir. 1956). The applicant, in this case, is applying for benefits under the federal law. Therefore, the definition of felony as stated in 8 C.F.R. § 244.1 applies in this case.

The applicant is ineligible for TPS due to his felony conviction. Section 244(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 244.4(a). Consequently, the director's decision to withdraw TPS will be affirmed.

An alien applying for temporary protected status has the burden of proving that he or she meets the requirements enumerated above and is otherwise eligible under the provisions of section 244 of the Act. The applicant has failed to meet this burden.

ORDER: The appeal from the withdrawal of the TPS application is dismissed.