

**Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on Vows for Visas: Investigating K-1 Fiancé Fraud
Wednesday, March 15, 2017**

Over the last several years, this Committee has heard testimony about the various ways individuals scam our immigration laws using visa categories offered by our federal immigration system.

Today, I want to talk about one category of immigration fraud that often goes unnoticed and forgotten: marriage fraud.

Recent reports have shown that the number foreign nationals who defraud American citizens to enter our country and receive a green card are increasing.

In fact, petitions for the K-1 fiancé visa have been increasing every single year. The State Department issued 44,000 in fiscal year 2016, which is 27 percent more than 2012. 89% of K-1 visa petitions are approved by Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Marriage provides one of the quickest paths to citizenship. That's why abuse of the K-1 visa category is very concerning. It provides foreign nationals almost immediate access to the United States and the benefits of US citizenship. Petitions for K-1 fiancés are quickly processed and approved in about eight to 12 months, compared to extensive wait times and restrictions in other visa categories.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement pursued more than 13,000 document and benefit fraud investigations reports from 2012 to 2015. That includes hundreds of arrests for marriage fraud, but the government cannot provide detailed statistics on the exact numbers.

This type of visa requires Citizenship and Immigration Services and the State Department to play the role of "immigrant marriage police." The government has to determine whether the intent to marry is genuine or just for immigration purposes.

Today, we will hear about their efforts to identify and prevent marriage fraud.

Of course, U.S. citizens should be free to marry foreign nationals. But, fraudulent engagements and marriages harm U.S. citizens who are manipulated and used for an immigration benefit, as well as foreign nationals who legitimately want to marry an American. This kind of fraud can also pose risks to our economy, public safety, and national security.

There are many different ways a con artist can commit marriage fraud. The most heartbreaking is when a foreign national dupes a U.S. citizen into believing they are in love. Upon entry, the foreign national often drags out the engagement, or abandons the US sponsor—becoming a visa overstay. Or the foreign national will leave the marriage as soon as they obtain their green card.

Today, we will hear from victims of this type of marriage fraud. Jamal Hussain is a naturalized citizen and Cardiologist in California who has lived in the U.S. for 20 years. He petitioned for a K-1 visa for his fiancé, who is a Pakistani national he met while visiting his family in Pakistan. Instead of marrying Mr. Hussain as planned, his ex-fiancé abandoned him, fleeing their home around the time the 90 day visa expired.

The next victim is Ms. Elena Lopez, who met her ex-husband while he was traveling in the United States. He is a Dutch national who proposed to Elena, telling her he “wanted to grow old with [her].” However, shortly before their second anniversary, he told Elena they were getting a divorce and that he married her only for the green card. When Elena refused to continue sponsoring him for a green card, he abused her and threatened to kill her.

However, not all cases are one sided. Sometimes all parties, including the U.S. citizen, knowingly enter the relationship with the intent of getting a visa and making a profit. For example, recently three individuals pled guilty to a large marriage fraud scheme in which they posed as attorneys and charged Chinese nationals up to \$50,000 to set up sham marriages. These shams led to 70 fraudulent marriages.

In another case, a woman in the Bronx, married 10 men from 1999 to 2010, charging them \$5,000 to \$10,000 each. At one point, she was married to eight of them at the same time. Among them was an alleged terrorist who was deported in 2006 for making threats against the United States.

Tashfeen Malik, one of the San Bernardino shooters came to the United States on a K-1 visa.

Not only are these cases full of fraud and deceit, they are a serious threat to our national security. K-1 visas are also commonly used by human traffickers to lure innocent women and men into their underground industries. A 2016 Inspector General report found that 274 subjects of ICE’s human trafficking investigations had successfully petitioned to bring fiancés to the U.S.

More needs to be done to close the vulnerabilities in our system, identify nefarious individuals who fraudulently say “I do”, and pursue action against fiancés who overstay their welcome in disregard of the 90 day visa program requirements.

I thank the witnesses for coming to testify, especially those who are here today to discuss details of their private, personal experiences.