



Posted on May 24, 2010 by [Robert A. Kraft](#)

[Visas for Illegal Immigrant Crime Victims Debated](#)

Two little-known types of immigrant visas are the T and the U visas. The T visa is for people innocently involved in human trafficking, and the U visa is for victims of crime. The U visa's basic purpose is to make it easier for police to prosecute those who commit violence.

Both types of visas were discussed in a recent [Dallas Morning News](#) article. Here are excerpts from the article, beginning with a discussion of the U visa:

The visas began flowing only 18 months ago and the majority have gone to domestic violence victims, say officials from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, up to 10,000 such visas are authorized annually. Illegal immigrants may receive such visas if they've suffered "substantial" physical or mental abuse from criminal activity and, among other things, a law enforcement agency certifies they have information on criminal activity. The visa can lead to permanent legal residency status.

The issuing of U visas comes at a tense time in the national immigration debate, amid a polarizing crackdown and potentially broader policing powers against immigrants in Arizona. And it illuminates a prickly point of justice: Should the federal government give illegal immigrants special treatment for a societal good such as fighting violent crime?

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act created both the U visa and the T visa. They're near the end of a complex network of visas, A through V.

T visas, for those involved in human trafficking, began flowing in 2002, but the flow of U visas was delayed as regulations on issuance were hammered out. In the last three full fiscal years, only about 250 to 300 T visas have been approved of the maximum annual allotment of 5,000.

In the last fiscal year, ending in September 2009, the federal government authorized 5,825 U visas. In the first five months of this fiscal year, nearly 5,000 such visas were given. There are about 6,600 visa applications pending, and the 10,000 allotment is expected to

be reached as early as next month, said Maria Elena Garcia Upson, a spokeswoman for the immigration agency.

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