

# Visas, Constitutions and Floyd's

*In Response to "No More Waiting on the Street for a U.S. Visa," an article by Caroline McGregor on Jan. 21.*

Editor,

As an American immigration law practitioner with more than 10 years of experience dealing with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, I would like to comment on Caroline McGregor's recent article.

While improvements have been made in the visa application system, the consular section at the Embassy continues to be plagued by arbitrary decision-making on visa applications; a systemic lack of transparency; lost documentation; lengthy and unsubstantiated delays; frivolous "information" charges; and disrespectful staff and officers.

Just a few examples to illustrate:

- A group of 25 Russians has taken the unprecedented step of suing the U.S. Embassy for depriving them of visas based on consular allegations of forgery and has charged the deputy consul general with obstruction for deliberately withholding signature specimens from forensic experts at the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

- A woman has been denied a green card because the embassy lost her police certificates on two different occasions. This after the embassy advised that her visa was ready; she sold all of her property and belongings in Krasnodar; and she paid for the visa. (To date, the embassy refuses to refund the money she paid for a visa that has never been issued, and her two children and husband wait for her in the United States.)

- A woman has been permanently barred from the United States because, according to the embassy, she had applied for and obtained a U.S. spousal visa before she was married. The woman, in fact, had never applied for nor did the embassy ever issue such a visa.

- A Russian entrepreneur has waited nearly two years for his application to be acted upon.

- A world-renowned scientist with more than 100 patents, the highest Russian state awards and references from two Nobel Prize winners has been denied an immigrant visa without any substantive explanation.

In Russian-language newspaper articles, the consul general admits that the U.S. visa system vis-a-vis Russia is a byproduct of the Cold War, is obso-

lete, and needs to be overhauled. Unfortunately, too many Russians are still waiting for these words to be translated into action.

Kenneth White  
Moscow

## Constitutional Dispute

*In response to a letter by Lenard Leeds on Dec. 20.*

Editor,

Lenard Leeds' letter shows that he is not very familiar with Russian life. He is right that practically no one in Russia knows the Russian Constitution except for lawyers, but that does not mean it should not exist.

Legislation, no matter whether good or bad, is adopted by the State Duma on the basis of provisions in the Constitution.

Anatoly Sobchak, to whom Leeds so contemptuously refers in his letter, was one of the most brilliantly educated and smartest of Russian lawyers. It is worth mentioning that President Vladimir Putin worked for some time as his deputy, when Sobchak was mayor of St. Petersburg.

If it were not for certain sad circumstances, Sobchak could very well have become the second president of Russia.

As regards the U.S. Constitution, which was adopted some 200 years ago, I hardly think it was perfect and, for instance, did not take into full consideration the rights of Indians and other ethnic groups.

A.V. Lukatchev  
Moscow

## Hot and Cold

*In response to "Cold Draft" by Chris Floyd on Jan. 17.*

Editor,

I fear that the war hawks that have taken over the United States are traveling similar paths to another warmonger of the past. They are making excuses to invade other countries and showing no real proof for their accusations.

I cannot understand how American citizens can be mesmerized by this individual leading us down a path of unwarranted aggression. It is almost the same propaganda that the Nazi party fed it's people to get the support or compliance of its citizens.

Of course, it will be the working class that will pay the price for this privileged fool who we call our leader. He and the war hawks will sit safely at home, while our young men die to do his bidding.

But, I guess we should take comfort in the fact that we will be making the war hawks/oil men who run our White House a good bit richer when they take control of Iraq's oil fields.

Mel Farris  
Davenport, Florida

Editor,

I saw Chris Floyd's piece mentioned on MSNBC. I was scanning the "news" channels; real news sometimes slips through. They were appalled by the cartoon shown and, I assume, the article in general. Naturally I had to check it for myself.

I found the article to be quite frank

and to the point. It's refreshing something not glossed over suitable for public consumption.

Tacor

Editor,

Chris Floyd is the best columnist writing in the Times. You had better pay him attention to keep him around.

Ji  
Ced

Editor,

I feel compelled to comment on whether he was ever in Iraq. I would be shocked if he had not because he doesn't have a good talking about. Not by a long way.

I will tell you up front that I am a supporter of some sort of intervention for every male and female in high school and college for one to two years. However, the administration's viewpoint and the low quality of education is right on target, not that should be obvious to anyone in Russia.

Of course, Floyd uses his opportunity to seize on Rumsfeld's comments regarding Iraq.

Many of President Bush's advisers are from the era and if you had ever been a military you would be glad because their mentality led to decisive the first time. I know the mistakes made as a result of letting politicians run the world away.



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We look forward to hearing from you!