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85 NO. 17 INTERREL 1272
85 No. 17 Interpreter Releases 1272
(Cite as: **85 No. 17 Interpreter Releases 1272**)

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Interpreter Releases Report and analysis of immigration and nationality law
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April 21, 2008

***1272 5. House Passes Religious Worker Visa Extension Act**

The House of Representatives has passed H.R. 5570, the Religious Workers Visa Extension Act of 2008. The Act requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to issue final regulations "to eliminate or reduce fraud in the special immigrant categories" in INA § 101(a)(27)(C)(ii)(II) and (III) [8 USCA § 1101(a)(27)(C)(ii)(II) and (III)] by the end of 2008.

Also included in the House's version is an extension of the deadline by which those seeking such classification must seek to enter the U.S. Currently, INA § 101(a)(27)(C)(ii) requires an immigrant to seek entry prior to October 1, 2008, for this category. The Act would change the date to January 1, 2010. Further, if by March 1, 2009, the Secretary of Homeland Security has issued the required final regulations, then the date would be extended to January 1, 2016. The Act also requires a report from the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security by September 30, 2010, outlining the results of a study on the effectiveness of the final regulations. The report would have to include "an analysis of a random sample of non-minister special immigrant religious workers, before their second anniversary of being admitted, to determine whether they are still employed by the religious organization that petitioned for them, and if not, the reasons for their departure from such employment."

The Act passed on a voice vote and was received in the Senate on April 16, 2008.

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