



Mark A. Prosser
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY
POLICE CHIEF

Mike Jones
FIRE CHIEF

Public Safety Police & Fire

401 East Milwaukee Avenue
Storm Lake, IA 50588

Lieutenant Chris Cole, Storm Lake, Iowa Police Department Statement in Support of U-Visas, T-Visas, and VAWA Self-Petitions November 3, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong support of U-visa, T-visa, and VAWA self-petitioning legislation. The U-visa has served as an instrumental crime-fighting tool in my experience working in Iowa. The U-visa is a tool to build relationships with community members and to help identify problems within the jurisdiction.

I am a Lieutenant with the Storm Lake Iowa Police Department. I have served the department for the last 17 years and have worked in the capacity of a patrol officer and as a detective. I currently work the streets as a supervisor of a patrol shift and am therefore on the "front lines" working with crime victims. The community I serve is approximately 53% Caucasian as a whole and about 73% non-Caucasian in the school district. Storm Lake is one of the most diverse cities in the state of Iowa.

While working in such a diverse city, I quickly learned that immigrant victims are often fearful to report crimes. Some of these fears include fear of being deported, family separation, financial fears, and fears of retaliation from the perpetrators. It is common for criminals to single out immigrants as their prey. Many of these violent offenders are very familiar with immigrant victim's fears and use those fears very effectively to their advantage. The U-visa is a tool to assist law enforcement in breaking down the barriers between the immigrant crime victims and the police.

Here is just one example of how we have used the U-visa as a crime-fighting tool in our community. One night, officers were called to a report of a domestic assault that occurred within our city. A male subject had returned home in an intoxicated state. He soon became engaged in an argument with his wife and subsequently attacked her by grabbing her by the hair and dragging her across the bedroom. He then repeatedly slammed her head into the headboard of the bed causing injuries to her face and head area.

Responding officers found evidence of an assault and learned that like many cases of domestic violence, this was not the first time that the man attacked the woman. Such violence had occurred before but the woman had never called the police. She was afraid that if she called that she might be arrested and deported. The only reason the police went to the home that night was that a third party had called. Officers on the scene arrested the suspect for domestic assault and removed him from the home.

Weeks later, I happened to be in the courthouse waiting to testify in a case when I saw the perpetrator strutting down the hallways laughing and grinning. It was evident; this man knew that his wife would not likely testify against him. The victim was clearly afraid. She was reluctant to testify against him. The prosecutor was familiar with the U-visa process and had built a relationship with the victim. Through this relationship came trust. That trust ultimately convinced the victim to take the stand and testify against her attacker. Use of the U-visa in this case allowed us to identify, arrest, and prosecute a violent offender that may have otherwise “flown under the radar” of law enforcement.

Respectfully,



Chris J. Cole

Biography

Chris Cole. Lt. Cole is a 17 year veteran of the Storm Lake Iowa Police Department. He has worked as both a patrol officer and detective before being promoted to Lieutenant. Lt. Cole has been named officer of the year and is the recipient to the law enforcement medal of valor for his role in gun battle with an armed murder suspect. Lt. Cole is currently assigned to the patrol division as a shift supervisor and team leader of the SLPD tactical Team. Lt. Cole holds a bachelors degree in police administration from Bellevue University. He is a graduate of the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy and a certified police instructor in multiple disciplines. His articles on leadership and survival mindset have appeared in nationally recognized magazines.