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**Statement in support of T and U nonimmigrant Visas  
November 3, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

This statement serves to express my strong support of the T and U nonimmigrant visas.

I have been a police officer for 22 years and for the last 16 years have worked extensively on a national level with agencies such as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) and others, both developing and delivering set curriculum for law enforcement and other service providers in the areas of domestic violence, sexual assault and numerous related subjects, including immigrant crime victims.

During my 22 years as a police officer working the front lines and assigned to a unit that specialized in violence against women, I observed firsthand the barriers that immigrant victims of crime face in reaching out for help. Additionally, I have experienced the frustrations of not being able to hold violent criminals accountable for their actions due to their victims' fear of deportation if they come forward and report crimes. This realization was magnified as I travelled the country over the past 15 years training law enforcement in the investigation of domestic violence and sexual assault. Countless officers related similar stories of frustration with investigating crimes involving immigrant victims.

In 2000, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act provided protection to immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other dangerous crimes. VAWA 2000 strengthened law enforcement's ability to detect, investigate and prosecute violent crimes perpetrated against immigrants. Those of us working the front lines know this legislation as a powerful tool that gives us the opportunity to keep victims safe and hold violent offenders accountable.

As I travel across the country delivering training to thousands of law enforcement officers, I hear the stories of how this tool has made a difference in the real world. I've heard accounts like the one from a detective at a recent training in Florida who talked of the larceny case he was working where surveillance tapes showed a sexual assault on a kitchen worker. The immigrant victim who was not a part of the original larceny case was contacted and cooperated with the detective who advised her of the U-visa process. A violent offender was arrested.

However, even with these promising stories, there is a major problem preventing us in the law enforcement community from accessing this tool, protecting victims and holding offenders accountable.

Lack of training on the U-visa, the T-visa and VAWA self-petitioning and the process for obtaining crime victim related immigration status prevents law enforcement agencies from detecting, investigating and prosecuting these cases as Congress intended. As a result, the justice system is ultimately failing to offer the victims of such crimes protection. In the past 5 years alone, I have trained

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several thousand law enforcement officers on this issue. It is my estimation that for every 100 officers I train about 20 have ever heard of the U-Visa. Of the 20 officers that have heard of the visa, I would say 2 or 3 would have the knowledge needed to utilize this tool in the real world and assist an immigrant victim in the process. Law Enforcement administrators and officers across the country need training on U-visas as a critical law enforcement tool.

As I conduct trainings throughout the country, I am frequently asked **WHY** this issue is important to me. My answer is an easy one, **VICTIM SAFETY AND OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY.**

With that answer in mind, let's take a look at these offenders. Who are they?

The offenders we are talking about are the most dangerous offenders in our communities. They are the criminals most likely to harm you or one of your family members. The crimes they commit are murder, rape, felonious assault, torture, human trafficking and domestic violence, to name a few. We are not talking about shoplifters, these are violent offenders

Looking at just one of the crimes, domestic violence, we can get an idea of how lethal these offenders are to not only their victims but to the law enforcement officers we appoint to protect us and to the communities in which they roam free. The FBI statistics will show that approximately 6 to 8 law enforcement officers are killed each year while responding to domestic violence calls. One killed officer is too many and we have ten times that many officers being murdered each year by domestic violence perpetrators.

What the statistics don't address is the "true lethality" of domestic violence offenders. It doesn't relate the number of officers killed in the line of duty each year at the hands of a domestic violence offender when they are not responding to a domestic disturbance. Like the officers killed serving warrants or orders of protection on domestic violence offenders, the officers murdered during traffic stops by offenders with domestic violence history, or the 4 officers from Washington State ambushed and killed while completing paperwork at a local coffee shop—the gun man was a domestic violence offender. Alarming, in the first three months of 2011 alone there were 10 officers murdered by domestic violence offenders, none of which were responding to domestic disturbances.

How dangerous can these domestic violence offenders be to you or your family? You need not look any further than Seal Beach, California where a domestic violence offender murdered his ex-wife and seven others in a beauty salon.

Lastly, I ask that you consider supporting the removal of the requirement that the head of the law enforcement agency appoint a **supervisor** to be the certifying official for the agency. I have been approached by dozens of officers like myself who are the most qualified in their agency to be the certifier but unable to be appointed due to this requirement. These are the officers Congress wants certifying—those who are engaged in their communities, and work with the same victims on numerous calls. In many jurisdictions the officers who understand the issue best and who are most qualified to access the situation are not in a supervisory role for their agencies. In some cases, this requirement

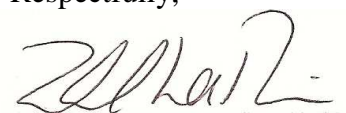
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causes the head of the agency to appoint a supervisor who has many other duties, thus reducing the attention that the certification process needs. Officers like me patrolmen assigned to a specialized unit that works directly with victims for whom this relief was intended to protect, or patrolmen who train law enforcement officers around the country on the U-visa, are not able to certify due to the supervisor requirement.

By removing the supervisor requirement Congress will provide agency heads the opportunity to appoint the most qualified officer to the role of certifier. Officers most qualified to assess the statutory requirements will better serve the certification process.

Respectfully,



#### Biography

**Michael LaRiviere** has been a member of the Salem Police Department since 1989. His duties during his 6 years as Domestic Violence Liaison Officer (DVLO) included domestic violence investigations, policy/procedure development, and training. Michael's work as DVLO significantly changed the way domestic violence cases are investigated in Salem and surrounding communities. Michael is currently assigned to the Patrol Division where he continues to actively respond to and investigate crimes against victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and other violent crimes. He has conducted extensive training and is certified through the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to train law enforcement, medical, social services, and legal professionals on these issues. Michael currently provides consultation and technical assistance nationally and has assisted in the development of training curriculums for local, state, national and military audiences. Mr. LaRiviere earned his B.S. in Human Services at Springfield College. He has been honored with a community award from HAWC (Help for Abused Women and Their Children) for taking concrete steps to end domestic violence and in 2002 he was recognized by the Office on Violence Against Women for his extraordinary contribution to the prevention of domestic violence. Office LaRiviere served as a member of the congressionally appointed Department of Defense Taskforce on Domestic Violence.