

December 17, 2003

**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS AND NYC DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS REMIND IMMIGRANTS OF DEC. 30 DEADLINE FOR U.S. VISA LOTTERY APPLICATIONS AND PROVIDE TIPS TO PREVENT POTENTIAL SCAMS**

Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) Commissioner Sayu V. Bhojwani and New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra today reminded immigrants of the fast-approaching December 30 deadline to file applications for the 2005 U.S. Diversity Visa Lottery. The Diversity Visa Lottery, administered by the U.S. Department of State, awards 50,000 permanent immigrant visas each year to people who come from countries with low rates of immigration. For the first time applications can only be filed electronically, and speaking from the Chatham Square Regional Library in Chinatown, City officials urged immigrants to use public libraries and community based organizations that have free online access to file applications through the official State Department web site at [www.dvlottery.state.gov](http://www.dvlottery.state.gov).

"New York City immigrants need to be well-informed about the Diversity Visa Lottery," said Commissioner Sayu V. Bhojwani. "Immigrants are particularly vulnerable because of language barriers and their unfamiliarity with U.S. laws. Lottery applicants must be aware of the many eligibility requirements, including whether their country of origin qualifies, and must be careful about how they file applications."

"All applications for the Diversity Visa Lottery must be filed through the State Department's official web site," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "New York City applicants can use one of the more than 200 public libraries or local community based organizations to log on for free. If applicants choose to pay for a service provider, the DCA let our fingers do the walking and compiled a list, available at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov), of accredited providers that are helping immigrants file applications. Filers should watch out for anyone who 'guarantees' winning, charges high application fees, or claims that legal services will be provided."

Applicants can call 311, the City's 24-hour service hotline, to file a complaint.

Operators at 311 can speak 171 languages and are available seven days a week, 24-hours a day.

**WHAT APPLICANTS SHOULD KNOW:**

- \_ The period to apply for the 2005 lottery is November 1, 2003 - December 30, 2003.
- \_ **Applications will only be accepted electronically.** Mail-in and delivered applications will not be accepted, and multiple applications will be disqualified.
- \_ **The official web site is through the U.S. Department of State - [www.dvlottery.state.gov](http://www.dvlottery.state.gov)**
- \_ **Selection in the lottery is completely random;** there are no guarantees to being selected.
- \_ **There is no application fee for the U.S. Diversity Visa Lottery.**
- \_ **Not all countries qualify.** If a person is from any of the following countries, they will NOT qualify for the lottery this year: CANADA, CHINA (mainland-born), COLOMBIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, EL SALVADOR, HAITI, INDIA, JAMAICA, MEXICO, PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES, RUSSIA, SOUTH KOREA, UNITED KINGDOM (except Northern Ireland) and its dependent territories, and VIETNAM.

**\_ Be careful of deceptive advertisements.**

Some ads may claim the service provider is a Notary Public or “Notario” and will promise to represent you in immigration process or provide legal advice. Notaries are not authorized to do this unless they are also a licensed attorney.

**\_ If you do not file an application on your own, make sure to use an immigration service provider who is accredited by the Federal Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA).**

A list of BIA accredited individuals and organizations in New York City that offer filing assistance are posted online at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

**\_ Never leave original documents such as passports or other identity documents with an immigration service provider.**

**\_ Don’t pay to use web sites selling services or claiming they are “accredited” providers.**

Free filing is available by going online to the Dept. of State web site at [www.dvlottery.state.gov](http://www.dvlottery.state.gov).

**\_ Always keep a copy of the application.**

If someone else files for you, be sure to get a copy as well as an acknowledgement of receipt.

**\_ Avoid doing business with providers using a P.O. Box.**

**\_ No business or service provider can guarantee winning.**

Selection is random. Filers do not get a better chance by paying a higher fee or by using a particular service provider.

To apply or for more information about Diversity Visas, visit the U.S. Department of State website at [www.dvlottery.state.gov](http://www.dvlottery.state.gov).

To file a complaint call 311, or to view the Diversity Visa Lottery Tip Sheet and get a list of accredited immigration service providers in New York City, visit [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).