



CNMI IMMIGRATION PLACED UNDER U.S. FEDERALIZATION LAW

Effective 28 November 2009, CNMI Immigration was officially placed under the control of the U.S. federal government, subjecting it to the same immigration laws as all U.S. states and territories. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its agencies now administer immigration in CNMI pursuant to Public Law 110-2209 which President Bush signed in May 2008. This law also gave the CNMI its first non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives.

However, the US DHS has yet to decide on whether to come up with emergency regulations allowing foreign workers to travel in and out of the CNMI or to issue a new set of rules for the transitional worker program. In the meantime, alien workers who need to exit and re-enter the CNMI will be dealt with by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on a case-to-case basis, including those traveling for emergency reasons or on “advanced parole” for others.

Non-resident workers in the CNMI who are eligible for a transitional worker visa are allowed to stay in the island during the validity of their permit or for two years, whichever is shorter.

Although U.S. immigration law applies to the CNMI, the CNMI will undergo a transition period with temporary measures ending on 31 December 2014 to allow for an orderly transition and give individuals time to identify an appropriate visa classification under the Immigration and Nationality Act.