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## News Release

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### **US Labor Department to exercise authority to certify applications for U visas**

#### *Action will help victims who aid law enforcement*

**WASHINGTON** — Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis today announced that the U.S. Department of Labor will begin exercising its authority to certify applications for U Nonimmigrant Status Visas. U visas — as they are known — are designed to help victims of qualifying criminal activities who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse and are willing to assist law enforcement or other government officials in the investigation or prosecution of those crimes.

"Regardless of immigration status, no one should have to suffer criminal abuse silently. U visas give some measure of security to immigrant victims who are desperate to escape an abusive situation and are willing to cooperate with law enforcement," said Secretary Solis. "I have instructed Labor Department investigators to identify potential U visa applicants as they conduct workplace investigations. This action will help local law enforcement rescue vulnerable immigrants from suffering and help put criminals behind bars."

Individuals who receive U visas may remain in the United States for up to four years and may eventually apply for permanent residency. The U visa was created by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. Qualifying criminal activities involve violations of certain federal, state or local criminal laws, including: abduction, abusive sexual contact, blackmail, domestic violence, extortion, false imprisonment, female genital mutilation, felonious assault, hostage-taking, incest, involuntary servitude, kidnapping, manslaughter, murder, obstruction of justice, peonage, perjury, prostitution, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, slave trade, torture, trafficking, witness tampering, unlawful criminal restraint and other related crimes.

Labor Department authority to certify U visas will be delegated to its Wage and Hour Division, which will identify potential applicants in appropriate circumstances during the course of workplace investigations. Among other U visa application requirements, a federal law enforcement agency or official must certify that the U visa petitioner has been helpful, is being helpful or is likely to be helpful in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity.

To view a fact sheet and more information about the certification of U visas, visit <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/opa20100312-fs.htm>.

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