



Frager Works at Forefront of Local, State and National Immigration Issues

LESLEY J. GUDEHUS | Special to The Daily News

Although immigration reform has become a hot topic in the media and around the water cooler in recent weeks, immigration law became Barry L. Frager's life work in 1990 when he was selected to serve as an attorney for the Immigration & Naturalization Service in Los Angeles.

The opportunity came to him via his participation in the U.S. Department of Justice's honors law graduate program. Then, in 1994, he founded Memphis-based Frager Law Firm PC, now a top immigration firm serving individuals and businesses in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and other parts of the United States. Based in Memphis, the firm also has an office in Nashville.

Frager earned his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1984. After graduation, he worked for Sen. Al Gore, D-Tenn., on Washington's Capitol Hill. During his time on the Hill, Frager noticed everyone who was promoted over him seemed to be a lawyer, so he decided to return to his hometown and enroll at the University of Memphis' Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, completing his law degree in 1989.

The immigration services his firm provides include deportation/removal issues, family visas, green cards, business immigration and citizenship. Frager also sometimes helps clients with other legal services such as personal injury, uncontested divorces and criminal law.

Frager has handled immigration cases throughout the United States from California to Washington, New York, New Jersey, Texas, Missouri, Tennessee and Louisiana. He is a member of the American



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Name: Barry L. Frager
Position: Managing Partner
Company: The Frager Law Firm PC
Basics: Frager, who founded his firm in 1994, serves clients in Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and other states. He deals mainly in immigration and related issues.

Immigration Lawyers Association, the Memphis Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association and the Washington, D.C., Bar Association. In addition, he chairs the Immigration Section of the Federal Bar Association.

Q: What kinds of cases do you typically handle?

A: When I worked for the INS, I was their lawyer in deportation proceedings. In private practice, I sit on the other side. I represent the immigrant; then there is the INS, which is now USCIS [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services], ICS [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and DHS [Department of Homeland Security], with their lawyer; then there is the judge. So I do a lot of court hearings, which means the person has been served to appear by DHS. We determine, one, are they removable as charged by the government? And two, if so, is there a relief under the immigration laws that should stop removal, such as asylum, eligibility for a green card or any other provisions Congress has determined? These are civil administrative hearings, not criminal hearings. Also, in cases in which those with green cards have committed crimes, we see whether there is a way they can retain their green cards. I am their lawyer.

[In addition] I am the lawyer for [naturalized] citizens or green-card holders who want to bring family to the U.S. So you might have a citizen or green-card holder wanting to bring a parent, spouse or child to the U.S., and we help them determine how long it will take. Some have no delay. Some have a one-, five- or 10-year delay. Some already have legally or illegally come from abroad. In the case of asylum, you may not have an immediate relative or employer to sponsor you, but you might ask for protection from your home government in cases of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or social group.

The last group, people being sponsored by employers, might qualify for either non-immigrant temporary visas or primary immigrant status, or green cards. [The latter qualification depends] on the status and availability of U.S. workers to fill those jobs, based on Congress' definition of who would be eligible.

Q: How do you communicate with clients from so many different backgrounds?

A: Our staff is made up of people who speak many languages - Chinese; Arabic; Indian languages, including Punjabi and Hindi; Spanish; German. Until recently we had someone who spoke Japanese. We speak a wide range of languages.

Q: How has your practice changed over the years?

A: Memphis is my hometown. When I returned in 1994, local attorneys told me, "You can't have a full-time immigration practice here." [But] this is what I knew. This is what I wanted to do. It was a shock to me to have to consider other cases. By 1995, it was clear to me I could have a strictly immigration practice, as well as handle non-immigration cases for my immigrant clients. My immigrant clients needed my help because of their

inability to speak to other lawyers, so I do a little criminal work because of the nature of criminal cases for immigrant clients.

We issue client ID cards to clients who retain us. I hope that by showing their ID cards, they show they are my clients and that shows they are not a threat. [The card] has the person's immigration number and it gets me involved early on and, we hope, to the advantage of my client. The card has a 24-hour emergency number. We put an expiration date on it, so the client has to come back to renew it. In many cases, clients change their address esfrequently, so this helps us maintain current contact information.

Q: Many immigrants are wary of anyone connected with the law. How do clients respond to you?

A: We go to churches and make speeches. We try to point [immigrants] in the right direction and try to keep them from people who want to trick them. We do community outreach to let people know we will help them. We recommend that they stay away from notary publics involved in the unauthorized practice of law. [Unfortunately] there is much taking advantage of their own within immigrant communities. People get hurt because they apply for programs they are not eligible for. We tell them they can't be that naïve. It's beyond belief why immigrants turn a blind eye to those trying to take advantage of them, but they think lawyers are too expensive and they need low-cost help. We've been trying to crack down on the unlawful practices of some notary publics. We have been unsuccessful in Memphis so far, but last year we did succeed in shutting down an office of notary publics practicing unlawfully in Nashville.

Q: Do you participate in continuing education for lawyers?

A: I'm the chair of the Immigration Section of the Federal Bar Association. I run the programs for them. We put on [a program] in Memphis to train lawyers in immigration law, as well as in crossover issues of family law and criminal law. We [put on] a seminar for lawyers on Thursday, May 18. As part of the seminar, [we presented] a program on [the Violence Against Women Act]. We're trying to train pro bono lawyers. ... Under [the law], the spouses and children of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents can self-petition to obtain lawful permanent residency. The immigration provisions of VAWA allow certain battered immigrants to file for immigration relief without the abuser's assistance or knowledge to seek safety and independence from the abuser.