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Immigration Update – November 1, 2004

Trow & Rahal, P.C. is pleased to provide this Immigration Update as a service to our clients and friends.

Each year the U.S. State Department issues up to 50,000 immigrant visas (green cards) by random selection through a Diversity Visa lottery. There is no cost for entering the lottery and the application process is relatively simple. The State Department will only accept applications submitted electronically during the 60 day application period from noon (EST) on Friday, November 5, 2004 until noon (EST) on Friday, January 7, 2005. Applications by mail will not be accepted.

Winners will be notified between May and July 2005, and will receive permanent resident status (green cards) between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006. The odds on winning the lottery are at least 100 to 1, and probably closer to 300 to 1.

Here is the link to a State Department website that provides information and instructions for lottery applications, as well as responses to a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs): http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants_types_diversity3.html. One change in the application procedures from prior years is that each applicant is required to submit electronically digital photographs that meet the Department of State's specifications.

Please note that people born in the countries listed below are generally not eligible for the lottery, unless they are married to a person born in another country, or meet certain other criteria set out on the State Department's website under the section "Requirements for Entry." The ineligible countries are: Canada, China (mainland born), Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, United Kingdom and its dependent territories, and Vietnam. Ineligibility is based upon country of birth rather than country of nationality. There are special exceptions that allow persons born in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Northern Ireland to apply.

We encourage all of our eligible foreign national clients to apply, and to forward this e-mail to any friends and family who may also be eligible to apply for the lottery. We also encourage all employers that we represent to forward this message to all of your foreign-born employees, even if they have already applied for or obtained a green card. Winning the lottery can provide a short-cut for a person who already has an application pending, and many people who already have green cards will have friends or family members who may be interested in the lottery.

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There is no need to use a lawyer to prepare a lottery application. The State Department's website provides comprehensive instructions. We are, of course, available to answer any questions that you or your employees may have about the lottery, and to assist anyone who wins the lottery in completing the application process. You can reach us by telephone at (202) 537-4830, by fax at (202) 537-4831, or by e-mail at the addresses below:

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