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L.A. Holocaust Museum Battles USCIS Decision to Deny Visa to an Austrian National

By **Dan Wilken**

The [Los Angeles Museum](#) of the Holocaust has filed an appeal on behalf of Valentin Hofer, an Austrian man, who was denied a visa by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

In order to fulfill his national service requirement, Hofer chose to volunteer at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust.

The USCIS denied Hofer's visa for several reasons, one of which was that they said that Hofer was not competent to qualify for the volunteer assignment. Hofer speaks fluent English and has completed numerous Holocaust history studies at an Austrian museum.

The Museum's Executive Director, Mark A. Rothman, calls the visa denial a mistake and says that the denial weakens the cultural exchange between Austria and the U.S.

In 1991, the Austrian government created the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service in order to recognize Austria's role in the Holocaust. In lieu of military service, 150 people have chosen to work as volunteers in a number of countries.

The USCIS, since September 11th, have repeatedly denied visas to volunteers.

The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust has enlisted the aid of a team of lawyers from the law firm of Manatt Phelps & Phillips to battle the USCIS decision.

E. Randol Schoenberg, the Chairman of the Museum's Board, said that even though the USCIS website guarantees a two-month process, they asked the office of U.S. Representative Henry Waxman to intervene in order to ensure that Mr. Hofer would be able to start his service as a volunteer.

Schoenberg says that he believes that Homeland Security's denial was filled with errors including the fact that they omitted page four of a five-page explanation for the denial.

The legal approach that the Museum will undertake is one that includes the fact that Hofer is competent and the USCIS's determination with regards to his incompetence is unfounded.

Schoenberg says that Hofer is not only fluent in English and has studied the Holocaust in depth, but he is also an honor student. The Museum submitted extensive information regarding Hofer's background which included his resume, a letter of intent, school records and descriptions of his work while he volunteered at the Austrian museum.

Rothman said that he understands the need for security as a result of September 11th, however, the denial of visas for individuals who have good intentions is unjust.

The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust was created in the early 1960's.

Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP is a legal firm that provides consulting and legal services worldwide.

Source:

Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, "L.A. Holocaust Museum Fights U.S. Immigration Service to Force Visa for Austrian National", prnewswire.com. URL: <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/08-23-2007/0004650331&EDATE=>

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