

Chair Lofgren's Statement for the Record
H.R. 2737, Private Relief Bill for Corina de Chalup Turcinovic
June 26, 2019

Corina de Chalup Turcinovic has been in the United States for nearly 30 years. On February 10, 1990, when she was just 25 years old, she rushed to the United States from her home in France after receiving news that her then-fiancé, Marin Turcinovic, had been struck by an automobile driven by a drunk driver.

Marin's spinal cord was severely damaged from the accident. Unfortunately, the extent of his injuries were underestimated by the treating physicians and when he was moved, he was left permanently paralyzed from the neck down. His paralysis was so severe, he required a ventilator to breathe and was rendered completely dependent on others for survival.

Totally devoted to the care of her fiancé, Corina overstayed her 90-day period of admission. As a result, on May 9, 1990, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) entered an administrative order of deportation against Corina. However, due to the gravity of the situation, the INS also granted her a stay of deportation, which was extended every

year for the next 10 years, allowing Corina to remain in the United States and care for Marin.

In 1996, Marin and Corina were married and two years later, Marin became a lawful permanent resident. An immigrant visa petition filed on behalf of Corina was approved, but because Marin was not a U.S. citizen, Corina was required to wait for many years before she too could become a permanent resident.

Five years later, Marin became eligible for U.S. citizenship and immediately filed for naturalization. A statement of disability was included with the application, explaining that Marin would require special accommodation in the naturalization process due to his paralysis.

Despite this, Marin received a notice to appear in person to have his fingerprints taken. Marin's attorney immediately contacted USCIS to reiterate the request for special accommodation, explaining that it would be impossible for Marin to otherwise comply. USCIS acknowledged the error.

Agency officials then stated that a USCIS officer would visit Marin at his home to further process his application for naturalization. But this did not happen. Instead, three months later, Marin received notice that his application had been denied due to his failure to appear for fingerprinting.

Marin's attorney filed a motion to reopen the naturalization application. USCIS again acknowledged its error and reopened the case. But just seven days later, Marin received yet another fingerprint appointment notice. And a short time after that, on April 28, 2004, he died.

Left without a husband and with no means to become a permanent resident on her own, Corina was unsure what to do. Having lived exclusively in the United States for 14 years, this country had become her own. She owned a home here and almost everyone she was close to was here.

In the 110th Congress, Rep. Daniel Lipinski introduced a private bill, H.R. 5030, on behalf of Corina. Since then, ICE has consistently granted Corina stays of removal. The last stay expired on March 15,

2019. The House has passed private legislation on behalf of Corina three times.

During this time, Corina once again found happiness and on July 17, 2017, she married Robert Wesche, a U.S. citizen. In January 2019, the couple appeared for an adjustment of status interview at USCIS. Shortly thereafter, USCIS denied her application, citing the 1990 administrative removal order. Despite multiple requests by Corina's attorneys and inquiries by congressional members and staff, ICE has refused to exercise its discretion to withdraw the administrative order.

To be perfectly clear, ICE has the authority and the discretion to withdraw the removal order and allow Corina to finally live a life of peace and stability here in the United States as a lawful permanent resident. Its refusal to do so is clear evidence of the senselessness of this Administration's cruel and unforgiving immigration policies. Previous requests for ICE reports have revealed no derogatory information about Corina, or any evidence of fraud or wrongdoing. The only issue is this 30-year old removal order.

It is sad that a private bill is the only viable solution for this deserving woman, but here we are. I am hopeful that the Subcommittee will once again vote in favor of requesting a report from ICE on a bipartisan basis so that we can move this worthy case forward.