Siam Legal International Reports New Approval Stages for US Spouse Visas

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Bangkok, Thailand - November 13, 2026 -
Siam Legal International, a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience assisting Thai and foreign clients, is reporting that CR-1 and IR-1 spouse visa cases at the US Embassy in Bangkok now pass through several approval stages before a visa is issued. An approval from the interviewing officer is no longer final, and officers are also applying closer review to public charge factors and applicants' public social media accounts.

CR-1 and IR-1 are immigrant visas for the foreign spouse of a US citizen, allowing the spouse to enter the United States as a permanent resident. Previously, the spouse attended the interview, the officer approved the case, and the passport was left at the embassy for visa stamping.

Under the current process, the interview approval is only the first of three stages. A qualified embassy manager, whose position and skill set must meet requirements set out in a recent State Department cable, must also approve the case. The case is then run through a new app that embassies now use as a final review.

The app reportedly uses artificial intelligence to search everything available on a case and can flag issues that neither the officer nor the manager raised. If it does, the embassy could cancel the visa before the spouse leaves Thailand. The US government has not publicly explained how the app works, though it may review public charge factors and public social media accounts.

Public charge is a legal ground on which the US government can refuse a visa to someone believed likely to depend on public assistance after arrival. Previously, the review focused mainly on the US citizen sponsor, and a strong affidavit of support with proof of income usually carried the case. Officers must now document in writing the spouse's own ability to overcome the public charge issue before approving the visa.

That review weighs the totality of circumstances, including the spouse's age, health, any history of long-term institutional care paid for by a government, family status, assets and financial resources, education and skills, and any history of receiving public benefits in Thailand or elsewhere. The sponsor's affidavit of support still matters, but it is now weighed alongside every other factor rather than carrying the case on its own.

"The biggest change for Thai-American couples is that a successful interview no longer means the visa is secure," said Rex Baay, Senior Immigration Consultant and Operations Manager at Siam Legal International. "With a manager review and an app review still to come, and public charge now assessed on the spouse's own circumstances, the strength of a case depends on how complete and consistent it is before the interview, not on what can be explained at the window."

Officers, managers, and the new app may also review an applicant's public social media profiles, including post history and comments. Any account linked to the applicant's name, phone number, or email address could appear in a search, and officers have broad discretion in interpreting what they find, with no publicly available standard for what leads to a denial.

Before the interview, applicants are encouraged to search their own name online, review posts and shared content, check privacy settings on every account, and be ready to answer questions about online activity. Information across both spouses' forms, social media accounts, and interview answers should be consistent.

After approval, couples are advised not to sell property, end a lease, resign from a job, or cancel insurance until the visa is physically in hand. Once issued, the spouse should travel to the United States as soon as possible, since delaying gives the embassy more time to revoke the visa before entry.

It is not yet clear whether the new approval stages will apply to K-1 fiancé visas. Couples applying for a US visa from Thailand can find the wider policy changes affecting Thai nationals in 2026 in Siam Legal International?s earlier report.

Siam Legal International is a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience assisting Thai and foreign clients, with offices in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. The firm provides comprehensive legal and immigration support across property transactions, business law, family law, and litigation.

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For more information about Siam Legal International, contact the company here:Siam Legal InternationalRex Baay+662 254 8900info@siam-legal.com18th Floor, Unit 1806 Two Pacific Place,142 Sukhumvit Rd, Khlong Toei,Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Siam Legal International

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Website: https://www.siam-legal.com/

Email: info@siam-legal.com

Phone: +662 254 8900