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July 2013 Barnett Law Group Breaking News

HAPPY JULY 4TH! Thursday, July 4, 2013 marks the 217th anniversary of the founding on the United States of America. This year we have had two momentous events in our country's history of importance to immigrants.

Senate Passes Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill

On June 27, the U.S. Senate passed the first comprehensive immigration reform bill in a generation by a vote of 68-32 (including 14 Republicans). The vote reflects a shift in the immigration debate and a sign that bipartisan efforts can work in Congress. Now, it's on to the House of Representatives. President Obama traveling in Africa has called upon Congress to send a bill to his desk by August.

While neither side got everything they wanted in the Senate bill, this marks a tremendous effort to reform not only unlawful immigration but also revamps our current lawful immigration system as well. If you wish to make your voice heard on immigration reform now is the time to contact your Congressman at <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>.

Supreme Court Strikes Down DOMA, Affirms Immigration Rights of Same Sex Couples

On June 26, the Supreme Court issued its decision in *United States v. Windsor*, striking down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, on the basis that it violated equal protection under the due process clause of the 5th Amendment. DOMA had established an exclusively heterosexual definition of "marriage," and denied same-sex couples any federal benefits, including immigration benefits. As a result thousands of same-sex couples have been forced to either leave the U.S. or to face deportation for one partner.

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano vowed to immediately begin implementing the decision to allow same-sex spouses to obtain immigration benefits. There are an estimated 28,500 bi-national same-sex couples in the United States who will now have the same immigration benefits and protections as other couples under U.S. immigration law.

Pamela Barnett will speak to the Houston Bar Association's Family Law Section on "U.S. Immigration Law and the Family Law Client" on Wednesday, July 10. If you or a member of your family is not a U.S. Citizen a family law issue may have immigration consequences.

The Barnett Law Group will be closed Thursday, July 4 – Friday, July 5 in observance of the Fourth of July holiday. Don't wait for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Visit us to discuss the many options you or a family member may have now for immigration relief.

If you are interested in learning more about these new developments, please contact our firm at (713) 980-9939 or admin1@barnett-lawgroup.com.