

COMMUNITY

Former Mayor Wildes discusses immigration law

BY MIKE CURLEY
Staff Writer

ENGLEWOOD – Former Mayor Michael Wildes spoke about immigration law to a small group of people at the West Side Presbyterian Church on Sept. 15.

Wildes, an immigration lawyer whose clients have included John Lennon and soccer star Pele, said he came to the church as part of a continuing series of discussions in the tri-state area about changes in immigration law, many of which were brought on after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

There are several levels of rights in immigration law, Wildes said, ranging from visitor status to citizen, and in addition there are two types of visas: nonimmigrant, or temporary visas, and immigrant, or permanent visas.

The United States, he said, is unique in how much emphasis the immigration process puts on the sponsor of the visa, which could be a relative or a company wishing to employ the applicant. Other countries, he said, use a broader point system of which the sponsor is only one criteria.

Wildes outlined special options for visas, such as for diplomats, and for spouses and dependents of those applying for immigrant status, and the variations of the non-immigrant visas, which are based on the purposes of the visit.

He then moved on to recent developments in immigration, like the start of on-site inspections of places of work with immigrant employees on H-1B worker's visas. The inspections, he said, began because the hijackers responsible for the 9/11 attacks were in the country on visas that were not checked on and had gone unnoticed after they had expired.

He added that many of the restrictions on immigration have become tighter because of the attacks and the continuing threat of terrorism. These, he said, include tighter regulation of religious worker visas that instituted after some Muslim Imams were found to be abusing the system to support terrorists. In order to not discriminate, Wildes said, the restrictions were applied across all



STAFF PHOTO BY ROY CARATTOZZOLO III

Former Englewood Mayor Michael Wildes discusses immigration law Sept. 15 at the West Side Presbyterian Church.

denominations.

Some countries, he said, are included in the country's visa waiver program, and their citizens can visit the US for up to 90 days without a visa, after registering online with the Electronic System for Travel Authorization.

In all cases, he said, there is

“presumption of immigrant intent,” meaning that those applying for nonimmigrant visas have to prove their stay will be temporary, and that they do not intend to use it as a way to immigrate into the nation.

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