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Schumer Seeks Girl's Speedy Return

By Bart Jones
Staff Writer

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November 13, 2002

Sen. Charles Schumer blasted officials yesterday for letting a Mount Sinai girl get stranded in Russia, and demanded that the U.S. ambassador in Moscow get her sent back to Long Island immediately.

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Elizaveta Kriatchkova, 11, went to visit her grandparents in Russia for the summer, but now can't return home because her parents inadvertently failed to comply with an Immigration and Naturalization Service regulation.

Photos



Kevin Huttenlocher, Elena and Liza Kriachkova

"This little girl has been away from her parents far too long," Schumer (D-NY) said in a letter sent yesterday to Alexander Vershbow, the U.S. ambassador to Russia. "Because of a simple mistake anyone could have made, what was a great new life in America for her and her mother has been turned upside down."

The girl's parents, Kevin Huttenlocher, who is a U.S. citizen, and Elena Huttenlocher, a legal Russian immigrant, acknowledge that they failed to properly obtain INS approval for Elizaveta to travel outside the United States while she still had a green card application pending.

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They say they got mixed up by INS rules and regulations, and thought they were properly filing the papers. INS officials say it would now be illegal to simply let the girl re-enter the country.

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However, Schumer said his office, which has been working on the case since September, helped obtain a new immigrant visa for the girl on Oct. 18 from the INS. The visa approval was wired to the embassy in Moscow and is waiting there to be processed, he said.

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"It is time for the American Embassy in Moscow to expedite Elizaveta's visa application as quickly as possible and allow her to be reunited with her parents," Schumer wrote, adding that the embassy has not responded to his office's inquiries.

An INS official who did not want to be identified said yesterday that the agency would be working with the embassy to try to resolve the complex issue.

Elizaveta, who left New York on June 26, was supposed to start sixth grade at the Mount Sinai Middle School on Sept. 6. Her parents say they are frantically pleading with authorities to cut through the red tape.



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"Her birthday is December 12," Kevin Huttenlocher said yesterday. "I'd certainly like to have her back for her birthday."

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