

## Foster, Denise

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**From:** teebah alsaleh [teebahalsaleh@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 27, 2013 10:26 AM  
**To:** Foster, Denise  
**Cc:** damon@damonshadid.com  
**Subject:** Comment on RPC 4.4 - Coercion Based on Immigration Status

Hi Denise - Below is a comment written by Damon Shadid, on behalf of the Middle Eastern Legal Association of Washington. Thank you.

The Middle Eastern Legal Association of Washington supports the proposed amendment to the comments of RPC 4.4 to make clear that lawyers cannot use immigration status to intimidate parties or witnesses in legal proceedings. This is a common sense rule that will protect individuals who notoriously lack access to justice in the legal system. Middle Eastern people are especially vulnerable to this sort of intimidation because of rampant racial profiling and stereotyping people with Middle Eastern ethnicities already face. MELAW has been made aware of multiple cases in which lawyers in civil cases have threatened clients with calls to ICE and USCIS in order to gain an advantage. These threats have ranged from false statements regarding links to terrorist organizations to claims of false marriage and veiled threats at deportation. Furthermore, we have been informed of many clients repeatedly contacted by the FBI and other government agencies based upon false reports from a party in a civil case. These contacts have the end result of these clients either speaking with the authorities, or risk getting put on government "no fly" lists until they decide to cooperate. This is especially prevalent in family law dissolution cases.

The rule has no real downside. It ensures that both parties and witnesses feel comfortable accessing the court system. Immigration status is rarely relevant to the facts of a civil lawsuit, and the potential damage that these sorts of allegations and threats cause far outweigh any potentially probative value.

Damon Shadid, Attorney at Law

Middle Eastern Legal Association of Washington