

# BIRTH TOURISM - TRUMP TO STOP THE BOOMING BUSINESS



President Donald Trump plans to fight the problem of birth tourism. According to drafts of the President's orders, as obtained by the media, the White House wants to oblige the Department of Homeland Security and the US Department of State to report on measures that they are taking to deal with this phenomenon.

Earlier, Trump repeatedly spoke about the issue. The president said that the so-called right of land, guaranteeing citizenship to all children born in the US, should be abolished.

"7.5% of all births in the U.S. are to illegal immigrants, over 300,000 babies per year. This must stop. Unaffordable and not right," Trump pointed out on his Twitter account in August 2015.

In his election campaign, **the billionaire said that automatic citizenship for babies in the US is "the biggest magnet for illegal immigration"** and therefore this practice should be abolished. Who would have known back then that Trump would now have the possibility to actually abolish the "right of land", enshrined in the US Constitution for 150 years.

Trump's calculations were not just accurate but even a little bit underestimated. According to data from the Pew Research Center, only in 2008, 340 thousand babies were born in the United States, in which at least one parent is a migrant without permission to stay in the country.

It is almost impossible to calculate the exact numbers of birth tourism. However, most of these tourists come from China, Russia and Nigeria.

According to data, in 2014, 60 thousand Chinese women arrived in the U.S. to give birth. The popularity of such "tours" increased among the Chinese after the release of the movie Finding Mr. Right. The movies' heroine travels to Seattle for the exactly same purpose.

Chinese birth tourism works on the concept of planned trips. Trip organizers advise women to arrive at the third month of pregnancy as to not get caught by the customs officers. Upon arrival in the US, Chinese women meet drivers and are transported to private pensions with all the best conditions for expectant mothers.

The cost of this tour can reach up to \$60 thousand. It includes visa, transportation, accommodation and after the birth of the child the babysitting services, assistance with obtaining birth certificates and other options. US law enforcement agencies have already organized several raids aimed at finding the owners and organizers of the birth tourism business.

Birth tourism is also booming in Russia. With the help of a simple search query one can find dozens of offices, blogs etc. offering Russian women childbirth in the USA. The most popular destination among Russian women is Miami, Florida due to its climate, environment and developed clinics.

Prices for trips vary depending on the company and services offered. One of the firms offers four packages to choose from. The "Optimal" for \$6.9 thousand to "Exclusive" for \$49.9 thousand. According to tour organizers, taking into account visa, apartment rent, gynecologist services, pediatrician, transportation and translation services, the final price tag will be at least \$32 thousand.

Regardless of whether women travel on their own or use services offered by the companies.

When advertising their services, companies point out that the vision of an American passport is not the only motive to give birth in the States. "Many travel for quality healthcare, others have had experiences with childbirth in Russia or Ukraine or failed IVF attempts."

Unlike their Chinese counterparts, Russian birth tours are legal. This means that companies give their customers category B2 visa for the purpose of medical treatment. It is also strongly recommended to have all documents from medical institutions and doctors at hand.

**Some service provided by such agencies are considered illegal by US authorities.** For example, in September 2016 the AmeriMama program received a lot of publicity. This program was organized by the Meadowlands clinic in New Jersey. In a Russian-speaking Facebook group, employees of AmeriMama offered not only services connected to childbirth, but also those in registration of citizenship passports and visas for the child. US authorities came to a conclusion that doing this, AmeriMama was trading with American citizenship. As a result, AmeriMama ceased to exist.

It is hard to predict how Trump's policies will affect birth tourism as of now, but one thing is certain. US citizens are not happy about the growing amounts of babies, as ultimately social security for each child is paid by the American taxpayer. Polls show that 65% of Americans oppose the automatic assignment of citizenship to newborns.

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