
RICHMOND ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS ECONOMICS

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Biography – Ms. Lakshmi Challa – Managing Attorney, Challa Law Firm

Lakshmi Challa is the managing attorney of the Challa Law Group and serves as senior counsel in LeClairRyan's Richmond, Virginia office. She has practiced law for over 20 years, representing a variety of clients including corporations, athletes, universities, entrepreneurs, and renowned chefs in various facets of immigration law, including EB-5 immigrant investor petitions, Department of Labor investigations, corporate immigration, and I-9 compliance.

For nearly a decade she acted as Special Counsel on immigration matters for the Virginia Attorney General's office, giving her particular insight into issues facing both universities and academics. In addition, she advised SCHEV on updating the Virginia Domicile Guidelines for determining in-state tuition requirements. She has been repeatedly invited to speak on immigration issues by the Virginia State Bar, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), as well as colleges and universities across the nation. She was also invited to speak at the regional conference of the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors on university-specific immigration issues.

Investing in enterprise is her driving force and her expertise with academic institutions is a natural fit for work with global entrepreneurs. She was invited by the U.S. Department of Commerce's SelectUSA to present on immigration options for U.S. expansion, sharing the stage with Department of State consular officers in several cities across India for the SelectUSA India Roadshow in 2016 and 2017. She often advises state and federal agencies on burgeoning economic development initiatives. During the gubernatorial tenures of Governor Mark Warner and Governor Tim Kaine, she traveled with trade delegations to delineate the pertinent legal and immigration conditions that were impacting U.S. business expansion. She regularly takes knowledge she has gained from these delegations to work closely with local and state economic development organizations, discussing immigration options with prospective international companies looking for investment and expansion opportunities in the United States.

She has worked on all aspects of business immigration for companies in a variety of industries, including information technology, pharmaceuticals, hospitality, healthcare, professional services, entertainment, and insurance. She secures work authorization for prominent sports professionals, representing individuals and teams. She also works with lauded restaurants across the U.S. on obtaining visas for world-renowned culinary talent.

Ms. Challa remains committed to assisting companies in the transfer of global employees. Her niche lies in identifying strategies for complex or high-volume situations and she is passionate about helping entrepreneurs and companies expand their businesses to the U.S. She facilitates the transfer of global employees for large companies, implementing creative, multi-faceted approaches to not only secure their immigration requirements, but also streamlining those processes, allowing companies to operate in an efficient and effective manner.

As stated earlier, Ms. Challa is deeply invested in the local community, educating organizations about new federal and state immigration legislation. She earned her law degree from the T.C. Williams School of Law at the

University of Richmond and she has been committed to serving her community over the past two decades. Ms. Challa served on former President Barack Obama's White House Roundtable for Innovation and Immigration, as well as former Virginia Senator Kenneth Stolle's Illegal Immigration Task Force.

Her community connections translate well with LeClairRyan and Challa Law Group's pro bono efforts. She has partnered with the Virginia Poverty Law Center, Catholic Charities, and the University of Richmond in developing an immigration clinic that assists victims of domestic violence, trafficking victims and unaccompanied minor children with their immigration needs. She also assists religious institutions with immigration sponsorship for their religious workers. She has been awarded many honors as a result of her service, including the YWCA 2016 Outstanding Woman in Business Award, *Virginia Lawyers Weekly* Influential Women of VA honoree, Henrico County Community Leader of the Year, and the Women Who Lean in Award at the LIVE2LEAD Conference.