DeWitt LLP Law Firm



Raluca Vais-Ottosen

Partner

Madison, Wisconsin

608-252-9291

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Service Areas:

- Immigration
- International
- Labor & Employment Relations

Education:

- J.D., Spiru Haret University Law School – Romania
- L.L.M., Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center
- B.S., Petru Rares National College – Romania

Admissions:

- New York
- Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court for the Eastern and Western Districts of Wisconsin
- U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit

Raluca is the Chair of the firm's Immigration practice group and assists clients with U.S. immigration matters ranging from family-based and individual immigration applications, to employment related visas. Originally from Romania, she utilized her personal experience as an immigrant to develop a special interest in U.S. Immigration Law.

Raluca is well versed in the following areas of U.S. Immigration law:

- U.S. citizenship and naturalization
- Adjustment of status to permanent residence (green card)
- Consular processing for immigrant visas, spouse visas, fiancé(e) visas or other family-based visas
- I-751 Petition to Remove Conditions
- PERM/EB-1/EB-2/EB-3
- National Interest Waiver (NIW)
- Physician National Interest Waiver (PNIW)
- H-1B, H-1B1, L-1, E-3, TN, and other work and business visas
- F-1 student visas, OPT and STEM OPT
- J-1 visas and J-1 waivers
- Parole-in-Place

- Military Parole-in-Place
- VAWA
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification

In addition to her immigration practice, she also has an extensive background in Employment law. She has assisted companies in a number of areas, including but not limited to claims of workplace discrimination, harassment and retaliation, termination and constructive discharge, workplace investigations by state and federal agencies, as well as employment litigation.

Affiliations

- American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA national), 2012 – Present
  - National Board of Governors, American Immigration Lawyers Association, 2025 – Present
  - Chair, American Immigration Lawyers Association Wisconsin State Chapter (AILA-WI), 2025 – Present
  - Vice-Chair, American Immigration Lawyers Association Wisconsin State Chapter (AILA-WI), 2024 – 2025
  - Treasurer, American Immigration Lawyers Association Wisconsin State Chapter (AILA-WI), 2023 – 2024
  - Secretary, American Immigration Lawyers Association Wisconsin State Chapter (AILA-WI), 2022 – 2023
- Chair of the Lexwork Americas Global Mobility - January 2024 – Present
- Community Immigration Law Center, Board of Directors, 2011 – Present
- Dane County Bar Association
- Literacy Network, Board of Directors, 2016 – 2020
- Big Oak Childcare Center, Board of Directors, 2018 – 2022

Articles & Interviews

Raluca is a regular blog contributor, bringing timely updates on hot issues in the immigration and employment law fields. She has also presented on immigration issues to individuals and businesses alike, and she has been invited as a guest speaker at the University of Wisconsin Law School's legal clinics.

Interviews

- "How Immigration Restrictions Show Up in Madison's Concert Halls" - The Capital Times, April 2026
- "Ukrainians who fled to Wisconsin left in limbo by Trump orders" - The Capital Times, February 2025
- Wisconsin's Migrant Workers: Their Lives And How COVID-19 Is Affecting Them - Wisconsin Public Radio (wpr.org), July 2020
- "Battling the Misconceptions of Being a Dreamer" – Interviewed by Madison Commons, March 2018
- "Madison College Student Worried About Her Future as DACA Looms" – Interviewed by Madison Channel 27 WKOW, September 2017
- "Immigrants In Dane County Experience Fear Following Executive Orders" – Interviewed by Wisconsin Public Radio, February 2017
- "10 Questions Raluca Vais-Ottosen: A Long Journey from Romania to Wisconsin" – Wisconsin Lawyer, April 2015

Articles: Please note only the most recent articles are linked below. If you are interested in viewing a complete listing of immigration articles published in the Immigration Law News, you can do so here.

- Author and editor - Chapter on Immigration Law, Wisconsin Attorney's Desk Reference, State Bar of Wisconsin, 2026 – Present
- "ICE Quietly Expands Employer Exposure in Updated Form I-9 Inspection Guidance" – Immigration Law News, May 2026
- "USCIS Implements New Security Vetting Process, Causing Adjudication Holds" – Immigration Law News, May 2026
- "Preparing Your Company for an ICE I-9 Audit — Best Practices Every Employer Should Follow" – Immigration Law News, February 2026
- "USCIS Premium Processing Fees Will Increase on March 1, 2026" – Immigration Law News, February 2026
- "Major Change in the H-1B Lottery Selection System Announced" – Immigration Law News, January 2026
- "Changes in the U.S. Naturalization Process for Permanent Residents Applying for U.S. Citizenship" – Immigration Law News, October 2025
- "Government Shutdown Impact on the U.S. Immigration System" – Immigration Law News, October 2025
- "E-Verify Temporarily Unavailable During Government Shutdown" – Immigration Law News, October 2025
- "I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Process Navigating Regulatory Compliance in the Age of Remote Document Examination" – Immigration Law News, March 2025

- "Green Card Eligibility and Process: Family Petitions" – Immigration Law News, February 2025
- "H-1B Visa Season Registration Starts March 2025" – Immigration Law News, February 2025
- "New Policy Announced to Provide Work Authorization and a Path to Permanent Residence for Qualifying Spouses of U.S. Citizens"– Immigration Law News, June 2024
- "USCIS Premium Processing Fees Will Increase on February 26, 2024" – Immigration Law News, December 2023
- "Visa Interview Waiver Extended and Expanded to Additional Visa Types" – Immigration Law News, December 2023
- "USCIS announces proposed changes to the H-1B visa program" – Immigration Law News, December 2023
- "I-9 Employment Eligibility Remote Verification Flexibility Is Ending" – Immigration Law News, June 2023
- "H-1B Visa Holders May Soon Renew Their Visas Without Leaving the U.S." – Immigration Law News, February 2023
- "USCIS Announces Final Phase of Premium Processing Expansion for National Interest Waiver Petitions" – Immigration Law News, January 2023
- "H-1B Visa Season Registration Starts March 2023" – Immigration Law News, January 2023
- "Ukraine and Temporary Exception from COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Travelers from Ukraine" – Immigration Law News, Jun 2022
- "STEM OPT Expands with 22 New Fields of Study" – Immigration Law News, January 2022
- "National Interest Waiver Options for Foreign Entrepreneurs" – Immigration Law News, January 2022
- "U.S. To Require COVID-19 Vaccines for Green Card" – Immigration Law News, August 2021
- "Form I-944 and Trump-era Public Charge Rule Terminated" – Immigration Law News, March 2021
- "Biden Administration Designates Venezuela for TPS" – Immigration Law News, March 2021
- "H-1B Visa Season Registration Starts March 2021" – Immigration Law News, February 2021
- "President Biden's Day One Immigration Executive Orders" – Immigration Law News, January 2021
- "Incoming Biden Administration Proposes Extension And Significant Expansion Of The FFCRA" – Immigration Law News, January 2021
- "USCIS Extends Deadlines to Respond to Certain Agency Requests or Challenge Unfavorable Decisions" – Immigration Law News, September 2020
- "Changes to I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Requirements During COVID-19" – Immigration Law News, September 2020
- "Government Fees for Immigration Benefits Going Up on October 2, 2020" – Immigration Law News, August 2020
- "Green Card Holders from Norway May Be Eligible to Become U.S. Citizens Without Losing their Norwegian Citizenship" – Immigration Law News, August 2020
- "Supreme Court Invalidates Trump Administration's Decision to Cancel DACA" – Immigration Law News, June 2020
- "Executive Order Temporarily Suspending Certain Work Visas to the U.S. and Extending Prior Suspension of Immigration" – Immigration Law News, June 2020
- "Trump Administration Issues Travel Ban for Certain Chinese Students and Researchers" – Immigration Law News, June 2020
- "Immigration Closures COVID-19" – Immigration Law News, March 2020
- "Practicing Social Distancing and I-9" – Immigration Law News, March 2020
- "Travel Ban Expands to Additional Countries" – Immigration Law News, February 2020
- "U.S. Imposes Travel Restrictions Against U.S. Citizens and Foreign Citizens Due to Coronavirus" – Immigration Law News, February 2020
- "New Year, New I-9 Version" – Immigration Law News, January 2020
- "2020 H-1B Lottery Will Take Place Early Based on New Filing Rules" – Immigration Law News, December 2019
- "Expired Form I-9 Still in Use Until Further Notice From USCIS" – Immigration Law News, August 2019
- "New Public Benefits Rule Affecting Legal Immigration" – Immigration Law News, August 2019
- "TN Work Visa under the NAFTA Agreement" – Immigration Law News, August 2019
- "Citizen In Limbo...Again" –Our Lives Magazine, July 2019
- "USCIS Will Transfer Green Card and Citizenship Applications to Speed Up Processing" – Immigration Law News, June 2019
- "Employer SSN No-Match Letters Are Back!" – Immigration Law News, June 2019
- "USCIS Rolls Out New H-1B Rule" – Immigration Law News, February 2019
- "USCIS Website Adds Filing Fee Calculator" – Immigration Law News, January 2019
- "E-Verify Unavailable Due to Government Shutdown" – Immigration Law News, January 2019
- "Getting Ready for a New H-1B Work Visa Season" – Immigration Law News, January 2019
- "New USCIS Policy Will Increase Number of Deportation Cases" – Immigration Law News, October 2018
- "New Policy Allows USCIS to Deny Immigration Benefits with No Notice or Opportunity to Correct Mistakes" – Immigration Law News, October 2018
- "Caregiver Industry Braces for Workers Shortage as Thousands Lose Employment Authorization in the U.S." – Immigration Law

News, May 2018

- "National Interest Waiver – An Alternative Path to Permanent Residence" – Immigration Law News, May 2018
- "Citizen In Limbo" – Our Lives Magazine, March 2018
- "USCIS Resumes Accepting DACA Applications" – Immigration Law News, January 2018
- "DHS terminates TPS designation for El Salvador" – Immigration Law News, January 2018
- "Federal Court Orders Partial Reinstatement of DACA" – Immigration Law News, January 2018
- "H-1B Visa Season – It's That Time of the Year Again!" – Immigration Law News, January 2018
- "New USCIS Policy Requires Employers to Submit Additional Documents for Employees' Work Visa Extensions and Renewals" – Immigration Law News, November 2017
- "New USCIS Policy Requires All Employment-Based Green Card Applicants to Attend In-Person Interview" – Immigration Law News, November 2017
- "I-9 and E-Verify News Round Up" – Immigration Law News, November 2017
- "ICE to Increase Number of I-9 Audits and Workplace Raids" – Immigration Law News, October 2017
- "DHS Terminates TPS Designation for Sudan; Extends TPS Designation for South Sudan" – Immigration Law News, September 2017
- "The End of DACA and How It Affects Individuals" – Immigration Law News, September 2017
- "The End of DACA and How It Will Affect Employers" – In Business Open Mic, September 2017
- "The End of DACA and How It Affects Individuals" – Inside Track, State Bar of Wisconsin, September 2017
- "276,000 Reasons to Button Up Your I-9 Process" – In Business Magazine, July 2017
- "I-9 Glitch Causes Errors in SSN Information" – Immigration Law News, April 2017
- "New Travel Ban Executive Order to Take Effect March 16, 2017" – Immigration Law News, March 2017
- "An Update on Trump's Executive Order on Immigration" – The Capital City Hues, February 2017
- "Executive Order Affecting Immigrants and Visa Holders from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen" – Immigration Law News, February 2017
- "H-1B Work Visa Season Is Coming Up" – Employment Law News, January 2017
- "New I-9 Form Version Has Been Released" – Employment Law News, November 2016
- "Government Fees for Certain Immigration Applications Increasing on December 23, 2016"– Immigration Law News, October 2016
- "New I-9 Form Version Expected by November 22, 2016" – Employment Law News, October 2016
- "Looking for a Start-up Visa? This New Proposal May Be the Alternative" – Immigration Law News, August 2016
- "U.S. Supreme Court Affirms Decision Blocking President Obama's Immigration Executive Action" – Immigration Law News, July 2016
- "EEOC Pursues Claims of Workplace Discrimination Filed By Legal and Illegal Immigrant Workers Alike" – Employment Law News, June 2016
- "Expired Form I-9 Still In Use Until Further Notice From USCIS" – Immigration and Employment Law News, May 2016
- "I-9 and E-Verify Compliance, Flat Fee Assessment Service" – Immigration and Employment Law News, May 2016
- "U.S. Customs and Border Protection Using Facial Recognition Technology at John F. Kennedy International Airport" – Immigration Law News, April 2016
- "Annual Cap for H-1B Skilled Worker Visas Again Reached Within First Five Days" – Immigration Law News, April 2016
- "The New STEM OPT Work Authorization for Foreign Students" – Immigration Law News, March 2016
- "DeWitt Helps Client Secure Big Win Against EEOC in Widely-Reported Employee Wellness Case" – Employment Law News, January 2016
- "Get Ready for the New H-1B Work Visa Filing Season" – Immigration Law News, January 2016
- "Executive Action on Immigration – DACA and DAPA Updates" – Immigration Law News, January 2016
- "Green Card Eligibility and Process: Family Petitions" – Immigration Law News, January 2016
- "Changes to Visa Waiver Program for ESTA Travelers" – Immigration Law News, December 2015
- "Department of Homeland Security Takes Steps Toward a New STEM OPT Extension Program" – Immigration Law News, October 2015
- "Retailer's Employee Dress Policy in Violation of Religious Anti-discrimination Law" – Employment Law News, August 2015
- "U.S. Department of Labor Issues New FMLA Forms" – Employment Law News, July 2015
- "International Students Statistics" – Immigration Law News, March 2015
- "EEOC Increasing Enforcement Efforts to Prohibit Employment Discrimination against LGBT Individuals" – Employment Law News, March 2015
- "Final Rule Extending Employment Authorization to Certain H-4 Dependent Spouses" – Immigration Law News, March 2015

- “Is Your Company in Compliance or Facing Fines? | The I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Process” – Immigration Law News, January 2015
- “H-1B Specialty Occupation Visa – The Filing Period Is Fast Approaching” – Immigration Law News, January 2015

Awards & Recognitions

- 2025 Wisconsin Law Journal, Legal-All Stars, Women in Law Award
- 2017 Jack DeWitt Pro Bono award
- 2017 Pro Bono Honor Society
- 2018 Pro Bono Honor Society

Client Recommendations

A great lawyer - "If you are looking for a great lawyer for all your immigration needs, look no further... Raluca Vais-Ottosen is the real deal! Raluca has been with me on my immigration journey from adjusting my status to filing for citizenship. Choosing her to be my lawyer was one of the best decisions I've made in life. She is professional, keen on details, quick, thorough, and communicates very well. I recommend her 1000%!"

Excellent help during my immigration process - "My wife and I hired Raluca to help our through my immigration process as the spouse of an American. Raluca explained the process to us thoroughly, gave us actionable advice, remained responsive thorough the whole undertaking answering any questions we had to our satisfaction, prepared me for my interview, helped us make the right decision when the U.S. consulate gave me inaccurate advice, and after I immigrated she fixed with USCIS an error that CBP had made so I could get the IR1 that corresponded to my case instead of the CR-1 they had incorrectly assigned to me. The whole time we felt well taken care of and knew we could always count on her professionalism and responsiveness. I would hire again without thinking twice and as a matter of fact I most likely will hire her again when the time arrives for me to naturalize."

Green cards for the whole family - "Raluca helped us navigating the complicated green card process. She submitted the application for the whole family, which was then approved extremely quickly. Thanks to Raluca we avoided various potential problems. Raluca is friendly and very efficient and we recommend her highly."

Best immigration lawyer in Madison - "I hired Raluca to help with my citizenship application. I had applied for citizenship about 18 months earlier and my application had stalled. Due to COVID the situation was complicated. Raluca sorted it out very efficiently and managed to get the application moving to a successful conclusion. I would wholeheartedly recommend Raluca for immigration problems. She is very likeable, listens very well and is extremely knowledgeable. It was a pleasure to work with her. I felt very comfortable with her and she is very honest and remarkably efficient. She always replied to all my questions almost immediately and was extremely helpful."

Thorough and effective - "We really need help navigating through the immigration process. Luca handled everything so professionally and expeditiously. I was very impressed and grateful!"

Best immigration attorney in the Midwest - "Raluca was the best. I received my GC less than 2 months after filing. She was very detailed and the process was so smooth!! Would definitely recommend!!!!!"

Experienced and Efficient - "Have you ever driven in the thick fog hoping an experienced driver would show up in the front with blinkers on so that you can follow? Or have you ever gone into the wilderness hoping to encounter a wilderness expert so that you won't get lost? Or for at least one time, you were in an airport, just hoping someone would show up to lead you from the entrance straight to your plane seat? Luca is that experienced driver, that wilderness expert, or that airport person we've been looking for. My wife and I worked on obtaining a green card through marriage ourselves. With so many forms and support documents to prepare, we decided to hire Luca as our immigration lawyer after consulting with her. During the application process, she always responds to our questions very fast and straight to the point. She's professional, efficient, and trustworthy. Thanks to her expertise, the whole immigration process got approved very smoothly. We highly recommend her to anyone who's looking for an immigration lawyer. And she will be the first one we go to when we need professional help in the future."

Professional with great communication – “My husband first met Raluca at a free consultation for students, and based on that positive interaction, we hired her to handle his immigration case. She was easy to work with, anticipated questions, prepared all documents in a timely fashion, and was very straightforward. She took time to explain everything thoroughly and responded to even our littlest questions promptly, even during evening and weekend hours. She and her team made what is a notoriously confusing, scary, and frustrating process as easy as possible. As we finished up successfully 4.5 years later, she also left the door open for future questions. We would enthusiastically choose her again for any immigration concerns that come up in the future.” Jennifer – Immigration Client

An Amazing Lawyer, above 5 stars!!! – “Let me start by saying retaining Attorney Vais-Ottosen as my immigration lawyer is one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life! She has successfully assisted me in navigating this complex immigration system (2019-2020). She is what I believe every lawyer should be like. She is meticulous, she listens to you carefully before advising, and she

ALWAYS responds in a timely manner. I have never had to worry about if she will get back to me soon. I was more shocked by how quickly she responds when I reach out to her. She will always tell you what the law states and not what "you want to hear," and that right there is the quality of a lawyer who wants the best outcome for your case. I highly recommend Attorney Vais-Ottosen for your immigration needs." Immigration Client

Excellent immigration lawyer – "We were referred by a friend to Raluca to update my immigration status from a work visa to a permanent resident status after getting married to a US citizen. Raluca was professional, highly knowledgeable and very helpful to navigate the immigration process and different forms to fill up. As well as all the additional documentation needed to justify my change of status. We cannot thank her enough to have helped us through this long and difficult process. And could not have done it without her." Julien – Immigration Client

Knowledgeable, clear, and professional – "Raluca has represented me for the last several years. From the start, it was clear that my case was in the best hands. Raluca walked me through the process step by step, answered my many questions clearly (and sometimes multiple times), and was very knowledgeable. She is extremely detail-oriented and provided additional guidance when needed. Raluca and her assistant, Julie Wilcox, communicated promptly and professionally throughout the whole process. I have been recommending her for the last couple of years and am thrilled to continue to do so here." Alice – Immigration Client

Great Communication – "After consulting with several lawyers, Raluca was the stand out in her communication and confidence in taking our case and we were not disappointed in hiring her. She clearly laid out the process for us and responded to all of our questions and concerns thoroughly. Both her and Julie, the Legal Assistant, replied to emails quickly and guided us through each step, making us feel well valued. We would highly recommend Raluca to anyone with legal immigration needs." Alex – Immigration Client

Very professional and efficient – "Attorney Vais-Ottosen was very knowledgeable about my green card process and she was able to adequately explain the process at every step. She always responded to my inquiries on time and with great detail. I strongly recommend her and I will undoubtedly trust her with my immigration issues in the future. Thank you Raluca!!!" – Gabriela – Immigration Client

Notable Representations

Raluca's immigration clients typically include individuals seeking to obtain a U.S. visa, permanent residence (green card) or U.S. citizenship for themselves or their family members; employers of all sizes wishing to hire foreign workers; businesses of all sizes that are going through an internal or government I-9 audit. Raluca has successfully represented individuals in proceedings before the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), as well as the U.S. Department of State through its U.S. Consulates abroad.

Raluca's employment law clients typically include businesses from a variety of industries that are facing litigation or disputes stemming from employment-related issues, or that wish to implement or revise their employment policies and procedures. Among other notable contributions, Raluca assisted two of the firm's partners in securing summary judgment for the employer and against the government in Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") v. Flambeau, Inc., Case No.14-cv-638(W.D. Wis. 2015), a case of first impression in the Seventh Appellate Circuit, dealing with the conflict between the company's wellness program and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Raluca Vais-Ottosen
Partner

Presentations

- Our Immigration System Is Broken! How Did We Get Here, and Where Exactly IS Here? - The State of the Union: Public Interest Edition 2026, March 2026
- Framework: Where Does the Law Come From & What Agencies Are Involved? - An Introduction to Immigration Law, April 2026
- Ethics: Risks of Practicing Immigration Law in a Chaotic Time - An Introduction to Immigration Law, April 2026
- "What Every Lawyer Should Know About Immigration Law" – 2024 Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conference, October 2024
- "Immigration, Employment, and Entrepreneurship: A Legal Symposium for Wisconsin's Workforce" – Panel presentation, September 2024
- Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources – U.S. Immigration Overview 2023
- Introduction to Immigration Law – State Bar of Wisconsin 2023
- Navigating Work Visa Options: Attracting Highly Skilled Foreign Workers, DeWitt HR Roundtable May 2023
- "Legal Implications of Work Visa Programs Including H-2A, J1, Plus Others" Midwest Forage Symposium, February 2023
- "Employers' Guide to Understanding and Navigating US Work Visas" – BioForward, December 2022
- "Our Immigration System is Broken! How Did We Get Here, and Where Exactly is Here?" – Legal Association for Women, September 2021
- "An Introduction to Immigration Law" – State Bar of Wisconsin, June 2020
- "Education and Career Challenges for Immigrant Youth" – Toward One Wisconsin, April 2019
- "Immigration Updates in Employment – WICPA" – Co-Presenter with Stephen DiTullio for the CPAs in Industry Spring Conference, March 2019
- "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished – Ethical Considerations of Pro Bono Representation" – Co-Presenter with Laura Davis for the DeWitt Annual Ethics Seminar, Fall 2018
- "The Great DACA Rescission: Understanding the Legal and Economic Impact" – The Knowledge Group, March 22, 2018
- "Immigration Law: The Challenge of Keeping Up With an Ever-changing Landscape" – Madison Area Paralegal Association, June 15, 2017
- "The Future of Business Immigration Under the New Administration" – The Knowledge Group, May 2, 2017
- "I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification New Year, New I-9 Form, New Administration! Now What?" – DeWitt HR Roundtable, March 21 & 23, 2017
- "Understanding The Latest Guidance in Conducting an Internal Form I-9 Audit" – The Knowledge Group, November 18, 2016
- Panelist on "Pitfalls for the Specialized Lawyer – Ethical and Practical Implications" – American Inns of Courts, March 2016
- "What the Non-Immigration Lawyer Needs to Know About Immigration Law to Meet Their Ethical Obligations" – DeWitt Annual Ethics Seminar, Fall 2015
- "I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them" – DeWitt HR Roundtable, October 27 & 29, 2015
- Overview of the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification – 2013
- Overview of the I-601A Application for Provisional Unlawful Presence Waiver – 2013
- Overview of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals – 2012