



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 12, 2026

11 Indicted in International Marriage-fraud Scheme. Trump Hits Birth Tourism, but No Sanctuary Officials Arrested.

A federal grand jury has indicted a marriage-fraud ring that set up more than 1,000 fake ceremonies to get phony immigration credentials for foreigners, mostly from Red China.

And the not-so-honest nuptials cost a pretty penny, the federal indictment alleges. The price: up to \$100,000.

The indictment follows President Donald Trump's executive order six days ago aimed at ending birth tourism. Pregnant foreign women plan a trip to the United States just in time to give birth, to create a new "citizen."



seb_ra/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Still to be done: arresting state and local illegal-alien sanctuary officials who refuse to cooperate with federal authorities in enforcing immigration laws.

[.@AGToddBlanche](#): "These charges, and the indictments now unsealed, show how far people will go to cheat our immigration system. Gaining American citizenship and legal status to reside in this great nation is a sacred privilege, and we will ensure it is always done in accordance... pic.twitter.com/psVA73LVGA

— U.S. Department of Justice (@TheJusticeDept) [August 12, 2026](#)

Complex Global "Fraud Network"

From 2016 through 2026, the Justice Department (DOJ) summary of the indictment alleges, the fraudsters "operated a nationwide and international marriage fraud network that arranged sham marriages between foreign nationals — primarily citizens of the People's Republic of China — and United States citizens."

The shifty operators operated in myriad states and two countries.

"Although based principally in New York City, the network allegedly arranged sham marriages throughout the United States and overseas including in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Vanuatu, and China," [DOJ reported](#):

The network included facilitators who oversaw the scheme and identified foreign-national customers; recruiters who found willing United States citizens and helped ensure their continued participation; and assistants who prepared immigration paperwork and coordinated the submission of fraudulent lawful permanent residency (Green Card)



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applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The scheme also relied on marriage officiants, attorneys, tax preparers, insurance providers, and other service providers.

The sham marriage and subsequent lawful permanent resident status could cost as much as \$100,000. The disloyal citizens who helped collected up to \$30,000, "generally in installments tied to milestones in the Green Card application process."

Recruiters collected \$5,000 for each disloyal citizen enlisted to contract a fake marriage.

Hundreds of citizens entered into the fake marriages, [DOJ continued](#):

The defendants executed the fraud by pairing foreign nationals with U.S. citizens. The individuals would often meet for the first time immediately before obtaining a marriage license, arranging sham wedding ceremonies, and staging photographs designed to make those marriages appear legitimate. ...

After the ceremonies, scheme participants manufactured evidence to make the marriages appear genuine, including by staging additional photographs, opening joint financial and utility accounts, filing joint tax returns, and obtaining insurance policies. The defendants and their co-conspirators then prepared and submitted Green Card applications containing materially false statements and, when interviews with USCIS were required, coached the marriage participants on how to conceal the true nature of their relationships and provide false answers to immigration officers.

The defendants caused at least hundreds of fraudulent Green Card applications and supporting documents to be submitted to USCIS. Based on the scale and duration of the scheme, the defendants' network is believed to have collected tens of millions of dollars from foreign nationals seeking lawful permanent resident status.

Foreigners paid "tens of millions of dollars" to enter the fake marriage and get lawful residence.

The two-count indictment charges the 11 defendants with one count of conspiracy to commit marriage and immigration fraud and one count of conspiracy "to encourage the unlawful residence of aliens in the United States." The first crime comes with a possible five-year prison stretch; the second carries a maximum 10-year term.

The DOJ website features photographs of the fake marriages.

No More Birth Tourism, but No Sanctuary Officials Behind Bars

Another violation of federal law is birth tourism. A pregnant foreign woman lands in the U.S. at near term, then drops an anchor baby, who is, we are told, an American.

Trump's executive order of August 6 seeks to curb that fraud.

□ BREAKING: President Trump just signed a SWEEPING executive order BANNING "birth tourism" in America



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"Birth tourism is, as of the signing of this order, hereby BANNED. And what that means is that no one in the world is any more allowed to obtain a visa for this fraudulent...

<https://t.co/7Lbv6QhgTT> pic.twitter.com/y2wnhhdWai

— Nick Sortor (@nicksortor) [August 6, 2026](#)

"Birth tourism operators use deceptive advertisements and inducements to entice foreign nationals to travel to the United States for the purpose of giving birth on American soil," the [order says](#):

They promise citizenship; access to public benefits; and short-term stays in specialized facilities, hotels, or rentals, but often fail to deliver on these promises. These operators coach their clients to misrepresent the purpose and duration of their travel to consular and border officials to obtain visas authorizing entry into the United States. Failure to appropriately combat these schemes has resulted in thriving industries around the world that profit by enabling the evasion of American immigration laws to obtain citizenship and other immigration benefits for foreign visitors, and the exploitation of the women who travel here for purposes of giving birth. ...

Participants in birth tourism schemes abuse these categories to establish a permanent foothold in the United States by securing the advantage of citizenship for their children and then potentially for themselves.

The order gives the secretary of state the power to stop the entry of birth tourists, including not granting or revoking visas.

But left undone is the arrest of sanctuary jurisdiction officials who warned that they would not cooperate with the federal government's enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

Border czar Tom Homan repeatedly warned that such officials would be arrested and prosecuted under [8 U.S. Code 1324](#), "Bringing in and harboring certain aliens."

A year ago, then-Attorney General Pam Bondi [threatened those officials](#) with prosecution for trespassing that same law, along with these:

- [18 U.S. Code 371](#), "Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud United States";
- [18 U.S. Code 1071](#), "Concealing person from arrest";
- [18 U.S. Code 1505](#), "Obstruction of proceedings before departments, agencies, and committees"; and/or
- [8 U.S. Code 1373](#), "Communication between government agencies and the Immigration and Naturalization Service."

So far, federal authorities have not arrested any sanctuary officials.



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