

# THE EB-5 EXPERT

Our special interview on The EB-5 Expert with JINHEE WILDE, CEO and Founder of WA Law Group, LLC, profiles the boutique immigration law firm helping EB-5 investors, corporations and private clients across the U.S. and around the world. *Executive Global* sit down with the pre-eminent attorney representing clients in matters of EB-5 investment and employment immigration, citizenship, naturalization and non-immigrant work visas.

“I vowed to be more accessible to our clients because they deserve VIP treatment.”

**EG** You have an exceptional record in I-526 and I-829 petitions with only three Requests for Evidence (RFE) on Source of Funds (SOF) from USCIS. Why does your experience make your firm the perfect choice for foreign executives wanting to relocate their business to the U.S.?

**JW** EB-5 cases combine both business (investment) and immigration documents in a single submission. I-526 and I-829 case files are usually thousands of pages long with document stacks 9-12 inches high, so providing a short summary of the case to guide the USCIS officer is key, and analogous to the executive summary of a long business plan. On the business side, it is essential to understand what the project is trying to do and how the investor's funds could play a role in it, and then translating that vision with skill and finesse for USCIS. WA Law Group, under my leadership, has been very successful in doing this, with a track record of 100% approvals thus far.

**EG** What are the greatest challenges you've faced as immigration counsel for Case Farms and as advisor on the EB-3 Other (EW) Program? How do these differ from the challenges pertaining to investment-based EB-5 Immigration?

**JW** Employment-based immigration under the EB-3 Other (EW) program requires a U.S.-based employer to prove that they do not have enough U.S. workers to fully staff their needs before they can sponsor foreign workers to supplement their hires. This process goes through three different government agencies—Labor Dept., USCIS, and State Dept.—and they all focus on

making sure that no U.S. employees are displaced and that a foreign worker is eligible and passes background/security checks. EB-5 immigration is completely different in that there is no U.S. employer sponsoring the foreign applicant. Instead, the program is designed to receive investments from foreign investors into a U.S. entity/project that will create 10+ full-time, permanent jobs for U.S. workers. The greatest challenge to being an immigration counsel is to explain to our clients what their specific immigration path would require in terms of documentation and presentation to government officials. This often necessitates following or understanding not just the letter of the law (regulation) but also the spirit or intent behind a statute, regulation or policy. We explain the minutia of these requirements to our clients to help them understand the years-long process and alleviate their anxiety.

**EG** Being a tenured attorney for over three decades and having been an immigrant yourself, how has your experience working in the higher echelons of the legal profession deepened your insight into the U.S. immigration system?

**JW** The biggest issue for many immigrants is the extremely long and arduous process of U.S. immigration. Having been an immigrant myself whose family went through many sleepless nights worrying what could happen to us and also seeing the other side of the process where the attorneys were too busy to communicate with their clients, I vowed to be more accessible to our clients because they deserve VIP treatment.

“Recently, this client obtained her citizenship and told me that *she did not know where she would be if I did not rescue her case from her previous lawyer.*”

**CV JINHEE WILDE**

- BORN**  
Seoul, Korea
- ALMA MATER**  
Loyola University Chicago School of Law
- EXPERIENCE**  
2009-Present Founder and CEO, WA Law Group, LLC.  
2005 Managing Partner, Teras & Wilde, PLLC.  
2004 Partner, Johnson & Yang, PLLC.  
2001 Commissioner, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.  
1989 Inspector General Designee and Special Counsel, United States Department of Agriculture.  
1985 Assistant Counsel, City of Chicago.

**EG** Who are some of the most successful investors you have advised, and what does profitability mean to you?

**JW** The most successful EB-5 investors are the ones who had their conditional green card approved (I-526 immigrant petition approved and DS-260 immigrant visa issued), had their application for removal of condition (I-829) approved, and had their full investment funds returned. We have many investors who went through all three steps successfully and even had their U.S. citizenship approved. As in any business, profitability is important to us. But unlike many other law firms that focus on billable hours and bill for every minute that the firm's staff communicates with the clients, our firm spends as much time as needed in responding to emails and speaking with them on the phone answering their questions and updating them. So, profitability is less important than making our clients feel comfortable and assured of their immigration process and progress.

**EG** As an award-winning firm, you have consistently ranked as a top immigration lawyer. How critical to your success as a firm, is quality customer service?

**JW** The quality of customer service is the key to our clients' satisfaction and the main driver of our awards. All of our clients state that our less than 24 hours response time to their communications and the accessibility of the top lawyers (partners) of the firm is the best. The fact that they do not get nickle and dimed for every call or email they send is also a great relief as they feel free to ask questions about their case status and their immigrant status.

**EG** Tell us more about the Jinhee Wilde Scholarship that you established to assist the next generation of aspiring lawyers?

**JW** I recently established a scholarship endowment at my alma mater, The University of Chicago, for the Jinhee Wilde, Esq. and Dr. David Wilde Odyssey Scholarship Fund. These scholarships are designed to give back to the community and encourage young men and women to follow their dreams.

**EG** Having worked as a partner for several prominent law firms in Washington D.C., what do you feel can be done to encourage more women to enter this field of law?

**JW** The legal field is still very much a man's world, where being invited to play golf with senior partners gives you greater insider status than putting in long hours at the office. Immigration law is replete with women lawyers, but they tend to be solo-practitioners and not partners at large law firms. I would like to see more women partners mentor their associate attorneys, like many male partners do. My partner, Sunwook "Sunny" An, was an associate attorney right out of law school, whom I groomed and made my partner after 10 years. She will inherit the firm as the Managing Partner after I retire in few years.

**EG** As an EB-5 Investment Immigration specialist, how does it feel to be a big part of America's success story, helping U.S. employers and positively contributing to GNP?

**JW** The work we do as business immigration lawyers is critical to helping U.S. employers maintain an adequate workforce through immigration. Employment-based immigration is a win-win-win scenario where employers get workers for jobs they cannot fill with U.S. workers alone, the foreign workers get immigration benefits, and the U.S. government is supplied with legal immigrants who will contribute to the economy and our tax base. EB-5 investments, on the other hand, actually put foreign capital into a U.S. region where there is higher than average unemployment or into rural areas to create more regional jobs—at least 10 permanent jobs must be created per investor immigrant. I cannot think of any government program on a per capita basis, including corporate tax cuts, that adds more to the U.S. economy than employment-based immigration—our government gets many more economic benefits from this than what it spends.

**EG** As a successful attorney and entrepreneur, who are some of the people that personally inspire you in business and why?

**JW** I do not have any particular person who inspired me as an attorney or entrepreneur. However, I admire women leaders who would mentor and groom associates or younger people who work for them rather than those who would roll-up the ladder up behind them after they made it to the top. In fact, I have seen many women leaders who treated female associates/staff tougher as if to say, "I had it difficult so you should also and get toughened up." As I said earlier, the legal



**ABOUT JINHEE WILDE**

During more than 3 decades of her legal career, Ms. Wilde has had a diverse and unique background, as corporate lawyer facilitating multi-million dollar, multi-national transactions, as a government prosecutor/attorney before changing her focus to business and investment immigration law.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- » First Asian American woman to be Commissioner of Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.
- » First Asian American designated as Inspector General of U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.
- » First Head of Korea practice at Arent Fox, Kintner, Plotkin & Kahn.
- » *Who's Who in American Law 2022* – Executive Spotlight.
- » *Top 100 Immigration Lawyer by Top 100 Magazine.*
- » *Top 25 EB-5 lawyer by EB-5 Magazine.*

profession is still very much a man's world, and many young male lawyers were groomed by male senior partners, whereas very few women partners do that for young female associates. I wanted to change that.

**EG** Having been an immigration lawyer for 20+ years with a high approval record across hundreds of cases, what is the most notable case that you are most proud of today?

**JW** Every case approval is very precious to us as we have changed their lives and allowed them to take a step in achieving their American dreams. The cases that make me most proud are those whose cases were messed up by other lawyers that I take over to successfully win them. Although I have many of these, the one EB-5 case that stands out is the one case where another lawyer who attempted and failed to do a case properly for the daughter of one of my clients by herself after only watching me do the mother's case. This is like me attempting to

fly a plane after having had flown as a passenger. The case was mismanaged from the beginning where this lawyer took six months to file the I-526 petition instead of one month that we usually take, which caused the client's optional practical training (OPT) to expire and causing her to lose her job at PricewaterhouseCoopers. Things became worse when this client's removal of condition application (I-829) received a Notice of Intent to Deny (NOID) and this lawyer gave up on the case as *she did not know how to overcome this negative decision*. I took over the case to successfully overcome this NOID and got the client's case approved, thereby saving her from losing another job—this time at Deloitte, and from losing her permanent residency. Recently, this client obtained her citizenship and told me that *she did not know where she would be if I did not rescue her case from her previous lawyer.*

**EG** How has your experience starting as prosecutor for the city of Chicago, Special Counsel at the United States Department of Agriculture, and then as corporate lawyer, being shaped your outlook?

**JW** The immigration law practice is an administrative practice where the case is adjudicated by government officials, not necessarily by a lawyer or judge. My 10+ years as a government lawyer gives me insight into how government officials think and how they review a case, emphasizing how it meets the public good that was intended when the law was legislated or regulated. My corporate legal experience negotiating multi-million dollar contracts allows me to review and understand complex projects and the financial documents that comprise EB-5 investment immigration cases. These collective experiences give me a unique set of skills to prepare winning immigration cases, so that we enjoy a nearly 100% approval track record in all types of immigration cases, not just EB-5.

**EG** You have a Juris Doctorate from the Chicago School of Law at Loyola University. How did your education and training prepare you to succeed at the forefront of U.S. investment immigration today?

**JW** Law school provides the foundations of law and legal procedure. It teaches you how to identify the issues of a case, do research, and present an argument. However, the greater part of learning how to practice as an attorney comes from on-the-job training. The nuances of immigration law are not usually taught in law school, so the best way to become an expert practitioner is to take the time to prepare cases in a detailed way that makes it easy for the USCIS officer to understand and approve the case. **EG**

For further information, please visit: [www.WALawUSA.com](http://www.WALawUSA.com)