



## A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO GONZÁLEZ

At the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2007, each USCIS component took the time to inventory their work completed over the past year. This issue of USCIS Monthly provides our agency stakeholders with an opportunity to learn more about our agency, evaluate what we have accomplished, where we met success and how we can look to improve.

2007 was a period of advancement at USCIS and it is necessary to recognize the extent of our forward progress to enhance security, improve customer service and sustain operational excellence so that we may tailor new goals and fresh initiatives for FY2008.

During this past fiscal year, USCIS embarked on a modern era of operations with an updated fee schedule that allows our agency to utilize new revenue streams and re-invest that money into business infrastructure upgrades. This development enabled us to initiate an ambitious facilities revitalization program and dedicate the USCIS Academy with a comprehensive suite of training and workforce development programs for our employees.

Behind the scenes, USCIS has streamlined outdated processes to make them more efficient and transparent, further transforming the way we do business by moving from a paper-based system to an electronic platform with a user-friendly, online account system. We have sharpened our focus on fraud detection and national security, and hundreds of new USCIS Immigration Officers specialized in the detection of fraudulent documentation and immigration scams have been deployed to USCIS field offices across the globe.

In fact, today one would be hard pressed to find a facet of immigration services where progress has not been made over the past fiscal year. From unveiling a new 100-question Naturalization Test, to developing E-Verify, the nation's first electronic employment eligibility system, there have been significant improvements to both our products and the quality of services we provide.

Nonetheless, we still have much work ahead of us. The United States faces many challenges in the realm of immigration. The security of our nation, both in terms of physical safety and our economic health, depend on a well-run, modern immigration system. I encourage you to read further and learn more about what we're doing at USCIS to keep our doors open, but well guarded.

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# USCIS: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE



At the beginning of 2007, USCIS introduced a [new fee structure](#) designed to ensure that a secure and efficient immigration system is maintained and enhanced. After soliciting comments from the public and reviewing responses from Members of Congress, community based organizations, refugee and immigrant service and advocacy organizations, public policy groups, state and local governmental entities, educational institutions, and private corporations, USCIS announced a final fee structure that went into effect on July 31, 2007.

USCIS made every effort possible to craft a rule and fee schedule that is fair, equitable, and appropriate given the urgent need to dramatically improve immigration services to our customers, enhance security and integrity, and build a modern and efficient agency for the long term. In conducting its fee review, USCIS used an [Activity-Based Costing \(ABC\) methodology](#) that assigned costs to the services and products USCIS provides. Revenue generated from the new fees will be reinvested to improve customer service, accelerate processing, enhance security, expand our offices, hire additional personnel, train those personnel, and create new business processes to decrease the time it takes to process applications.

USCIS has incorporated a productivity measure into the fee model to ensure that productivity gains resulting from automated business processes and better technology will be factored into future fee reviews. USCIS plans to review and update fees every two years. In comparison to fee reviews conducted during previous administrations, fee reviews going forward will combine assumptions from recent experiences, incorporate productivity gains resulting from the modernization of operations, and take account of foreseeable changes in national security measures and procedure.

USCIS does not rely on taxpayer funding for its operations. More than 90% of the USCIS annual budget comes from the fees it collects from applicants. Federal law and established regulatory policy have long called for the costs of providing immigration benefits to be borne by those applying for them. In the past, USCIS has relied on temporary funding sources, such as appropriations. As opposed to annual appropriations from Congress, a stable and reliable funding source of fee revenue allows USCIS to operate more effectively and respond to changing operational needs.

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## USCIS INTRODUCES NEW NATURALIZATION TEST

At USCIS, we don't create new Americans; instead we empower individual immigrants with the information and tools necessary to become a part of our American community and identify with our common civic values and shared history. In October, USCIS completed a redesign of the [naturalization test](#) administered to prospective Americans. The revised 100 questions and answers emphasize the fundamental concepts of American democracy, focusing on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the basic values we share as Americans.

With assistance and input from a variety of stakeholders and immigrants themselves, the new test is designed to be an effective tool to encourage civic learning and patriotism. By studying for the test, applicants will learn about our shared history and common civic values, but most importantly—learn to identify with them as their own.



In conjunction with accompanying U.S. history and civics study materials, the redesigned test will serve as an important instrument to encourage civic learning and patriotism among prospective citizens. Following the public introduction of the redesigned naturalization test on September 27, 2007, there will be one full year before naturalization applicants begin taking the revised test. This period will allow adult educators and immigrants working toward citizenship sufficient time to prepare for the redesigned test. More information is available on the new [naturalization test](#) at [uscis.gov](#).

# NEW USCIS FACILITIES COMING TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



In April, USCIS unveiled a national model for domestic operations with a new modern office design and facilities revitalization initiative. The goal of this program is to transform USCIS District and Field Offices into full-service, community-based customer processing facilities.

These new buildings are more than just bricks and mortar. They are a tangible symbol of USCIS' commitment to modernize and transform the way we do business. Over the next three years, USCIS will replace or renovate 36 office locations across the country. These facilities will contain all the resources necessary to efficiently process benefit applications and petitions, making each location a one-stop-shop for all immigration related needs.

This full-service facility concept will make it easier for clients to access services by eliminating the need for them to travel to multiple locations during the application process. It will also greatly enhance the level and efficiency of services USCIS provides by increasing opportunities to conduct interviews, answer customer questions and conduct on-site naturalization ceremonies, all in one location.

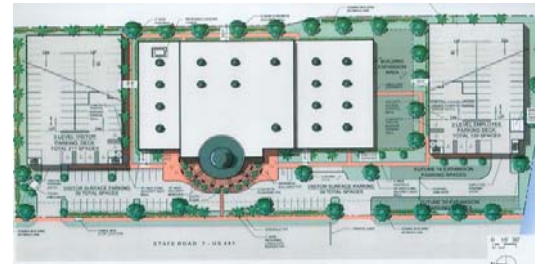
USCIS is identifying the best locations to build new offices based on geographic analysis of where our customers are and how we can best provide services. In some cases, the analysis will indicate the need to renovate or replace an existing facility with an upgraded, centrally located, full-service office. In other cases, the analysis will show the need to replace an existing structure with several smaller full-service offices in surrounding areas, bringing services closer to the communities where the applicants live.

The decision to renovate or replace a facility depends on its physical condition and sustained ability to meet the USCIS mission and the needs of its customers. When the Department of Homeland Security assumed control of immigration services, most of the facilities were overcrowded, inefficient and located in areas that did not serve the immigrant community. Because it is cost-prohibitive to replace all facilities at once, USCIS is using a systematic approach, focusing on the worst facilities first, followed by successive upgrades to new facilities as leases expire.

Look for a new USCIS facility coming to a community near you!



**Facilities Completed in 2007:**  
Atlanta District Office (January)  
Imperial Field Office & ASC (May)  
National Benefits Center (April)  
New York District Office (October)  
San Francisco District Office (May)



**Facilities in Development for 2008:**  
Arlington Asylum Office  
Harrisonburg File Maintenance Facility  
Providence Field Office  
Raleigh-Durham Field Office  
Dallas District Office  
Denver District Office  
Detroit District Office  
Garden City Field Office  
Miami District Office  
Miami Broward Field Office  
Miami Hialeah Field Office  
Miami Kendall Field Office  
Orlando Field Office  
Orlando Southeast Regional Office  
Portland Field Office  
Sacramento District Office  
Seattle District Office  
West Palm Beach Field Office  
Western Regional Office





## WELCOMING NEW AMERICANS PROMOTING CITIZENSHIP

The Task Force on New Americans is a federal inter-agency effort to help immigrants learn English, embrace the common core of American civic culture, and successfully integrate into the social fabric of our nation. Established by President Bush and led by USCIS, Task Force members collaborate to provide immigration information resources to communities and organizations, encourage volunteerism, and conduct targeted outreach efforts to facilitate the assimilation of immigrants.

One major priority of the Task Force is to improve access to essential information for new immigrants. Launched in June, [WelcometoUSA.gov](http://WelcometoUSA.gov) is a comprehensive web portal leveraging resources from a wide variety of federal agencies to present newcomers with a range of critical information. The [New Americans Project](#) seeks to encourage volunteerism among both U.S. citizens and new immigrants through a series of national outreach events and a zip-code based online search engine listing volunteer opportunities in local communities.

In conjunction with the USCIS Office of Citizenship, the Task Force is also providing public libraries, adult educators, volunteers, and others who work with immigrants with better training and increased resources. Two examples are the [Civics and Citizenship Toolkit](#), which contains a variety of educational tools for immigrants and will be distributed for free to public libraries, and [U.S. Civics and Citizenship Online](#), a series of web-based and regional training courses for volunteers and adult educators.

Throughout 2007, the Task Force has hosted a series of roundtable discussions across the United States to learn more about successful immigrant integration practices. These roundtables gather input from immigrant-serving organizations, businesses, state and local governments, academia, community and faith-based organizations, adult educators, public libraries, foundations, and traditional civic organizations. The Task Force will present its findings and recommendations in a formal report to the President.

## SECURING AMERICA'S WORKFORCE



In FY2007, participation in the E-Verify employment eligibility verification program doubled from nearly 12,000 employers in FY2006, to nearly 25,000 employers at the end of FY2007. Currently, E-Verify is used by over 33,000 American companies at more than 133,000 business locations nationwide. In FY2007, more than three million new hires were checked by using the E-Verify program.

The program piloted and successfully launched the Photo Screening Tool to all users in September, allowing employers to visually compare the photo presented to them on USCIS issued documents as part of the Form I-9 process to the images on those documents located in USCIS databases. E-Verify also began work on a small-scale monitoring and compliance functionality designed to facilitate compliance with system usage and to detect patterns of fraud or abuse within the program. E-Verify launched a national Internet campaign and a radio/print ad campaign in Arizona, a state that is requiring all employers to participate in E-Verify beginning in January 2008.

### What is E-Verify and how can I use it?

E-Verify, formerly known as the Basic Pilot employment eligibility verification program, is a free Web-based system that works by electronically comparing new employee information taken from the Form I-9 against more than 425 million records in the Social Security Administration's database and more than 60 million records in the Department of Homeland Security's immigration database. Currently, 93 percent of an employer's queries are instantly verified as work authorized. Register for and learn more about E-verify at:

[www.dhs.gov/E-Verify](http://www.dhs.gov/E-Verify)

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# NEWS YOU CAN USE...

## FROM USCIS COMMUNICATIONS

[USCIS Updates Guide for New Immigrants](#) - 12/11/2007

[USCIS Announces Fee Waiver for California Fire Victims](#) - 12/07/2007

[Fact Sheet: Task Force on New Americans](#) - 12/06/2007

[USCIS Expands Immigration Officer Training Capacity](#) - 12/05/2007

[USCIS Revises Filing Instructions for Petition for Alien Relative](#) - 11/30/2007

[USCIS Issues Reminder to Nationals of Burundi to Re-register for Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#) - 11/28/2007

[USCIS Reminds Employers to Transition to New Employment Eligibility Verification Form by Dec. 26, 2007](#) - 11/23/2007

[Questions and Answers: Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program](#) - 11/21/2007

[Fact Sheet: Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program](#) - 11/21/2007



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## ANNOUNCEMENT ON PROCESSING TIMES AND CASE STATUS

USCIS experienced a significant increase in the number of applications and petitions filed for benefits. In July and August alone, nearly 2.5 million applications and petitions were received – double the number typically received in a 2-month period. In FY2007, we received 1.4 million applications for naturalization, more than the totals from FY2006 and FY2005, combined. 40% of those, or 562,000, were filed in the 4th quarter. Applications for Employment and Family based adjustment of status increased by 76% from 497,000 in FY 2006 to 875,000 in FY 2007.

Applications are processed in the order they are received by application type. The average [processing times](#) for all applications are posted on our website. Processing times are an estimate of how long it will take to complete your case. If you have just filed your application, these timeframes may not reflect how long your application will take to be completed. We encourage you to check processing times before inquiring about your case. The processing times are updated monthly.

Each case is different; so some cases may take longer than others. As a result of the higher than average number of applications and petitions received, processing times for certain application types may be longer. In particular, naturalization applications filed after June 1, 2007 may take approximately 16 - 18 months to process. You can use your receipt to check your case status on [Case Status Online](#). The agency is working to improve processes and focus increased resources, including hiring approximately 1,500 new employees, to address this workload.

When your application is received by a USCIS Service Center or the National Benefits Center, we will mail you a receipt notice. The receipt notice will have all of the important information you need about your case. With your receipt number you can check the status of your case on our website and also register on our website for automatic case status updates as we process your case. For more information about when and how to contact us, whether your case is outside our processing time, or if there are other issues, please see our customer guide [How Do I...know what kind of services are available to me after I file my application or petition?](#)

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**USCIS: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY**

# OUTSTANDING AMERICANS BY CHOICE

The [Outstanding American by Choice](#) initiative recognizes the achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to the country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans. Throughout the year, USCIS Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.

## ANNA PRAGER

Anna Prager came to the United States as a holocaust survivor in 1952 at age 16, with her parents, who had escaped from Europe before World War II. They had escaped from Poland into Russia during the Russo-German Pact. After the war, they returned to Poland to find all of their close family killed in the war. They emigrated to Sweden, then to Israel, from Israel to Canada, and finally to the U.S. The family settled in New York City, where Ms. Prager attended Queens College.

In her professional life, Ms. Prager has touched many people's lives in a variety of roles including research chemist and chemistry teacher, community planner and policy analyst, and leader of Rhode Islanders for a Drug Free Community. Ms. Prager has also served in leadership positions on the South Kingstown Town Council, the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, Save the Bay, Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, Governor's Council on Environmental Affairs, Rhode Island Section of American Planners Association, and Rhode Island Land Use Commission. Ms. Prager has been recognized as an outstanding leader with the Distinguished Leadership Award from the American Planners Association and the Leadership Rhode Island Community Service Award.



Anna Prager receives the Outstanding American by Choice certificate from USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez at the Providence Field Office



Tze Ng receives the Outstanding American by Choice certificate from USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez at the Providence Field Office

## TZE NG

An immigrant from Hong Kong, Tze Ng arrived in the U.S. as a student in 1976 having obtained a degree from a Hong Kong college in social work. He is now a leader and one of five Deacons for the largest Chinese community church in the region, the Chinese Christian Church of Rhode Island, in Pawtucket. Mr. Ng also serves on the board of the Rhode Island Association of Chinese Americans. These two organizations are the only organizations that provide support to the Chinese immigrant community in Rhode Island and southeast Massachusetts.

Mr. Ng began his professional life as an entrepreneur in dry cleaning. He then moved into commercial real estate development and in this role has had significant community impact. One property he developed includes the 66,000 square foot building that houses his church, the Chinese Christian Church, as well as space for a variety of other community activities. Although a very humble man, Mr. Ng has played an important leadership role in Rhode Island and to the growing Chinese community in the region as both a civic and business leader.



# ADOPTED VALOR: IMMIGRANT HEROES

## FOREIGN BORN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

### PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SILVESTRE HERRERA - WWII

Upon receiving his draft papers, Silvestre Herrera, a 27-year-old father of three, learned for the first time that he was not an American citizen, rather, that he was born in Mexico, adopted by his uncle after his parents died. Because he wasn't an American citizen, Silvestre wasn't obligated to serve in World War II.

Silvestre's reply was defiant, he said, "I'm going anyway." He didn't want anybody else to die in his place. He said, "I am a Mexican-American and we have a tradition, we're supposed to be men, not sissies."

As a member of the Texas National Guard, 36th Infantry Division, Silvestre found himself fighting in France on March 15, 1945. Advancing with his platoon along a wooded road, they were stopped and pinned by heavy enemy machinegun fire. As the rest of the unit took cover, he made a 1-man frontal assault on the German strongpoint, shooting three and capturing eight enemy soldiers. But Silvestre's day was just beginning.

When the platoon resumed its advance, Silvestre's unit was subjected to fire from a second emplacement, beyond an extensive minefield. Herrera ran forward, intending to take cover behind a boulder, when he stepped on anti-personnel landmine that blew him into the air. When he came down, he hit another mine. He lost both legs just below the knee.

Despite his violent injury, Herrera somehow managed to hold onto his M-1 rifle. After applying a bandage to his legs he braced himself against the boulders for cover and began firing at the enemy. He hit at least one of the Germans and forced the others to stop shooting and take cover.

Later Silvestre said, "I was protecting my squad. I was trying to draw their fire. I was fighting them on my knees." Despite intense pain, two severed legs and an unchecked loss of blood, he pinned down the enemy with accurate rifle fire allowing another squad the enemy gun by skirting the minefield and rushing in from the flank.

Silvestre returned stateside to recover from his wounds and five months later he was decorated with the Medal of Honor personally by President Truman. His service both during World War II as a soldier, and as a patriot since that fateful day in France, brought him continued honors and distinction. An elementary school in Phoenix bears his name, and he is the recipient of several community awards. Herrera died at his home in Glendale, Arizona, on November 26, 2007.



Silvestre Herrera  
Rank: Private First Class  
Branch: U.S. Army  
Nation of Birth: Mexico



**715 OF THE 3,410 CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS IN AMERICA'S HISTORY - MORE THAN 20 PERCENT - HAVE BEEN IMMIGRANTS TO THIS NATION.**



# “HOW DO I...?”

## KNOW WHAT USCIS SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME AFTER I FILE MY APPLICATION OR PETITION

While our primary focus is on processing applications and petitions, we still offer a variety of services after you file.

To be fair to all of our customers, we process cases that are the same type based on the order in which they were filed. We will notify you, usually by mail, when we make a decision on your case, or if we need something from you.

Want an idea of how long it will take us to process your case? The easiest way to monitor [processing times is on our website](#), where we post the filing dates of cases that we are now completing. We list this information for each kind of case and for every USCIS office and service center. This lets you project how long it will be before your case is completed.

As you use this information, keep in mind that this processing time is not only a projection of how long it will take to process your case from start to finish. It is a projection of how long it will take to process cases that were filed before yours, and then process yours. Processing times can change as we process cases. We update our information as we process cases. So, if you don't hear from us within the processing time based on what we are completing now, just check our website, or call customer service for updated processing time information.

Most of the time a case is pending we will be working on other cases filed earlier. But many customers still want to be able to track the processing of their case. So, we assign receipt numbers to each case that we process in our service centers and, in fact, to most new cases. The receipt number is simply an inventory control number assigned to a case. It starts with three letters, such as “VSC,” and then has a series of numbers. If your case was assigned a receipt number, you will find it on the receipt notice or biometrics appointment notice that we mail you about the case.

You can use your receipt number to [check your case status online](#), or when you call customer service, to get basic case status information from our automated systems to supplement the information about processing times. With your receipt number, you can also register on our website to get automatic case status updates as we process your case.

The processing times that we publish let you estimate how long it will take us to process cases filed before yours, and then process your case. Every case is different and sometimes an individual case can take longer than average. If you don't hear from us within the normal processing time, check for updated processing times on our website.

If your case has a receipt number, use it to check on the status of your case at the same time. We recommend this action on your part because our notice may be on its way to you.

If at any point your case should become more than 30 days outside our normal processing time, and you haven't received a written decision or update from us within the last 60 days, you can help us by calling customer service and letting us know. We will research your case, see what needs to be done to get it processed, and get back to you with an explanation.

If you filed a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, and it has been longer than 90 days since you filed and you haven't gotten an update from us within the last 60 days, and have not seen any public notice regarding your case type, please don't wait the extra 30 days. Call customer service immediately.

Understanding the circumstances that cause certain types of applications to be filed, we also have a premium processing program that lets you judge your own circumstances and decide if you want to pay for faster processing. We know that circumstances can change, so this program is available even after you file. At this time, this program is only available for most kinds of temporary worker petitions (filed on Form I-129). For more information, see our website, or call customer service.

We understand the effects our processing times can have on customers, and we are working hard to shorten processing time. When Premium Processing is not available, we will consider taking a case out of order if there is a life or death emergency and our processing the case out of order will have a direct effect on the situation. We are very restrictive in granting this kind of preferential treatment, because it means other customers have to wait longer.

By definition, most kinds of applications and petitions rarely, if ever, merit this kind of preferential treatment. But if you believe such a situation exists when you file a case, or develops while your case is pending, call customer service for information about how to request accelerated processing, and about what documents and evidence you will have to submit to show that a “life or death” emergency exists.



# WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

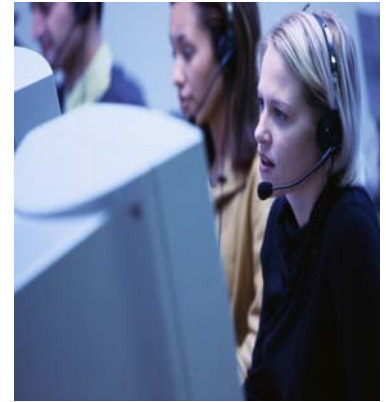
How would you like to work for an agency that changes lives everyday, invests time and money into the career development and growth of its employees, and comprises a diverse workforce providing unique opportunities? USCIS offers all that and more! It is worth your time to find out if a career at USCIS is right for you!

You can make a significant impact on immigrants' lives while protecting and securing our shores by helping qualified immigrants and refugees gain the promise and potential of legally living and working in the United States and becoming U. S. Citizens. Contribute to the USCIS mission to maintain the integrity of our nation's immigration system and build on America's promise and foundation as a beacon of hope and liberty.

In 2007, USCIS hired 458 new permanent employees, of which 120 were veterans, underscoring the agency-wide focus on attracting a diverse pool of candidates. The USCIS Chief Human Capital Officer has created a recruitment campaign to support a national Adjudication Officer hiring project. The campaign showcases USCIS career opportunities on USAJOBS website and posts job announcements on over 3000 electronic college bulletin boards and within job placement offices.

The Federal government offers a number of [exceptional benefits](#) to its employees. These benefits include, but are not limited to: health care, life insurance, flexible spending and dependent care accounts, annual and sick leave, long-term care insurance, retirement savings plans, and transit subsidies.

USCIS has a variety of positions available including several unique immigration-related core positions. See what is available right now at [USAJOBS.com](#).



**SEE THE LINKS BELOW TO FIND OUT IF A CAREER AT USCIS IS RIGHT FOR YOU!**

[USCIS Career Descriptions](#)

[Prep Guide for Adjudication Officers and Applications Adjudication Test Battery](#)

[Special Programs at USCIS](#)

[Federal Employment Benefits at USCIS](#)

[Current job openings at USCIS](#)

**OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE  
NATIONWIDE, APPLY NOW!**

**USCIS AND DHS: SECURING OUR HOMELAND**