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News Release

USCIS Announces Elimination of Naturalization Application Backlog *Making a difference, one case at a time*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced the elimination of the backlog for the N-400 Naturalization Application. Having completed some 342,290 backlogged cases, USCIS average processing times for the N-400 fell from a previous high of 14 months in February 2004, to approximately 5 months today.

Overall, the gross backlog of all applications has decreased from a high of 3.8 million in 2004 to just over 1.1 million in July 2006. Of this gross backlog of 1.1 million, 140,000 cases are considered backlogged and under USCIS control as of July 2006. Cases considered to be **within** USCIS control are defined as those which are ready to be adjudicated. Cases **outside** our control, and therefore, not counted in the net backlog include: cases that are pending law enforcement security checks, naturalization test retakes, naturalization candidates awaiting scheduling of a judicial ceremony and cases in which an applicant has failed to respond to a request for additional evidence needed to complete the adjudication.

While the average processing time for most applications is less than six months, we recognize that some cases remain pending beyond our six month standard. We remain committed to continue to concentrate our efforts on those cases that are outside target cycle times.

These positive efforts are reflected in the naturalization of a record 28,000 new Americans during this year's Citizenship Day and Constitution Week ceremonies and represent ongoing USCIS efforts to meet President Bush's mandate to process most applications within an average of six months of filing by October 1, 2006.

"Our work takes on significance beyond other government benefits. What we do is more than just numbers, applications and forms. The services we provide profoundly affect people's lives," said USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez. "By eliminating the Naturalization backlog, we provide those who aspire to become Americans with an invaluable opportunity to contribute back to our Nation."

The men and women of USCIS process record numbers of cases each month without compromising national security. Everyday, USCIS completes more than 135,000 security and background checks. Each of the 28,000 new citizens naturalized this week will have undergone this mandatory screening, and USCIS has expanded the range of applicants required to submit fingerprints and other biometrics to reduce immigration and identity fraud.

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