



**Homeland
Security**

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CIS OMBUDSMAN TO THE DIRECTOR, USCIS

To: Eduardo Aguirre, USCIS Director
Cc: Admiral Jim Loy

From:: Prakash Khatri, CIS Ombudsman

Date: October 06, 2004

Re: Recommend that USCIS provide customers with a single forms package per type of petition/application regardless of which district office or service center will process the petition/application.

I. BACKGROUND

When an immigration customer requests USCIS to provide the necessary forms and information to submit a petition/application, the forms and information provided the customer varies among the district offices. Some offices only provide the basic forms, others provide office-unique instruction sheets, and others provide unique form combinations.

At the USCIS Eastern Forms Center when a customer requests forms the Center first looks at the customer's postal zip code, identifies the USCIS District Office with geographic jurisdiction, and then sends the customer a forms package unique to that district office. At present, for persons seeking the forms for petition for alien relative and concurrent adjustment of status (Forms I-130 & 485) the Eastern Forms Center maintains 37 different packages dependent on the appropriate district office and, in some cases, sub-office. Additionally, should a customer move from one district office's jurisdiction to another, the customer may find him/herself noncompliant in his/her petition/application submission based on the different submission requirements for the two district offices.

II. JUSTIFICATION

All petitions and applications for immigration benefits are the result of federal statutory and regulatory requirements. Because federal law governs immigration benefits, the information being sought in USCIS forms and their subsequent processing should be uniform across the country and not subject to a myriad of local rules.

In addition, variant local filing rules confuse the customer and are counterproductive to quality and efficiency.

III. BENEFITS

A. Customer Service:

Customer service would be greatly enhanced by uniform requirements for each USCIS petition and application. Customers and their advocates would not have to interpret different local instructions for what should be a national standard.

B. USCIS Efficiency:

USCIS efficiency would increase as follows:

- The Eastern Forms Center would have fewer stock and distribution requirements.
- The training of adjudication officers could be simplified by eliminating the myriad of local policies and returning to a national standard for adjudication.
- Adjudication officers could become more fungible because they could be assigned to different offices without needing substantial training on office-specific adjudication requirements.
- Requests for Evidence by adjudication officers may be reduced when all offices follow a national standard of required supporting documentation.
- The Processing Backlog may be reduced. Petitions/applications from understaffed offices could be transferred to USCIS offices with excess staffing with no detriment to the customer because the cases could be adjudicated according to a national standard rather than different local requirements.

C. National Security:

National security could be enhanced by virtue of a reduction of the backlog, more efficient processing of petitions/applications, and more concise information being provided to the adjudicators at time-of-submission.