

## EXTERNAL FACTORS WE MUST WATCH

The following factors could affect our ability to achieve our strategic goals in the next 5 years:

- **Health Care:** Trends in health care affect our work. Our workloads are growing rapidly as the baby boomer generation enters its most disability-prone years. Studies show Americans in their early to mid-50s today are in poorer health than 50-year-olds were in years past. From 2000 to 2006, the number of individuals filing for disability benefits increased over 60 percent. Increases in the number of individuals with chronic diseases, coupled with the fact that the medical community is still developing standards for electronic medical records, challenge our ability to deliver service in our disability programs. Additionally, our supporting role for Medicare will be impacted as the Medicare rolls grow and could be further impacted if changes to the Medicare program are enacted.
- **Immigration:** The current number of undocumented immigrants in this country is about 12 million. Legislative proposals for immigration reform often include an expanded role for us in enforcement, oftentimes creating additional non-core workloads. As the legislative process continues, we will ensure that Congress is fully informed about the implications of its decisions on our agency.
- **Technology:** Just as health care and immigration reform are fast moving targets, so is technology. What we think may be coming within the next 5 years may be completely different when it arrives. On the other hand, it may not arrive at all. We must continue to monitor technological change for viable options to improve our service.
- **Funding Levels:** While we will pursue process, policy, systems, regulatory, and legislative improvements to address current and future challenges, all our strategies depend on adequate and sustained funding. Funding will be critical to our ability to achieve our goals. We also must maintain a strong level of performance in all our core workload areas, as well as provide the level of service the public expects and deserves every day.

