



Office of Communications

**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

News Release

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USCIS MAKES MAJOR STRIDES DURING 2008

Application processing, transformation, FBI name checks, all part of agency enhancements

WASHINGTON—More than one million new citizens took the *Oath of Allegiance* during fiscal year 2008, just one of the significant accomplishments introduced today by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Acting Director Jonathan Scharfen highlighted the agency's progress throughout the past year and discussed future goals, saying the positive results are directly attributable to the USCIS workforce.

“The tremendous dedication and hard work of more than 18,000 USCIS employees and contractors has resulted in the continuous progress we've realized this past year,” Scharfen said. “We set aggressive goals to reduce application processing times, further cut the FBI name check backlog, and began a viable transformation process for the agency. I'm proud to say that we are achieving those goals while ensuring that national security is an essential part of our ongoing customer service improvements.”

Key accomplishments for the year include the following:

- Completed more than 1.17 million naturalization applications, up more than 50 percent from FY07.
- Reduced naturalization application processing times to 9-10 months, down from the 16-18 months projected after the surge of applications in late FY07.
- Hired 1,600 new adjudications officers during FY08. Significantly revised and restructured the existing training curriculum and developed the BASIC training program at the USCIS Training Academy, preparing new officers to be “job-ready” upon completion of training.
- Worked with the FBI to effectively eliminate all name checks pending more than two years and reduced the cases waiting for a name check final result from almost 350,000 in late FY07 to less than 37,000.
- Interviewed more than 100,000 refugee applicants and completed more than 47,000 asylum applications.
- Increased participation in E-Verify, the nation's preeminent employment eligibility verification system, by 260 percent over last year, resulting in the verification of more than 10 percent of the Nation's new hires.

During FY09, USCIS' goal is to achieve a 20 percent reduction in processing times for the majority of key petitions and applications, in spite of having to work through an unexpected surge of applications received during FY07. The agency plans a five-month processing time for naturalization applications (N-400s) and a four-month processing time for both adjustment of status applications (I-485s) and petitions for alien workers (I-140s).

USCIS moves into 2009 with a more aggressive agenda to improve its services to customers. The agency has awarded the Transformation Solution Architect task order to IBM, a five-year investment to improve its filing

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and adjudication systems. The task order is just one of the building blocks of USCIS' overall transformation plan made possible through last year's implementation of a new fee structure.

"We're proud of 2008 and the milestones we've met," Scharfen added. "But, much work remains. We are gearing up for 2009 with a forward-looking and robust agenda that will result in an even better immigration service for our customers and our great Nation."

[Fact sheets](#) on USCIS' 2008 accomplishments, as well as updated processing times for both naturalization and adjustment of status applications accompany this press release and are also posted on the USCIS Web site. For more information on USCIS and its programs and services, visit www.uscis.gov.

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