

encouraged by the management's awareness of them and the initiatives undertaken by the staff to address both underlying and immediate concerns.⁵⁹

OBSERVATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS FROM THE OMBUDSMAN'S TRIPS AND MEETINGS

If a DORA application is rejected at the Lockbox, there is no communication to the local field office. The rejection only goes to the applicant.



The Lockbox sometimes creates a new applicant file when one already exists for the applicant.



Stakeholders have received rejected applications with another applicant's documents enclosed.



Stakeholders report that they have received multiple receipts for some applications and no receipts for other applications.



If an application is sent to the Lockbox rather than a service center, the Lockbox returns the application to the applicant rather than forwarding it within USCIS.



RECOMMENDATIONS AR 2007 -- 11

For the Chicago Lockbox, the Ombudsman recommends that USCIS:

(1) Implement a procedure so the Lockbox will not accept a new filing if a case already has been denied and a Notice to Appear (NTA) issued;



(2) Institute a process to notify a field office when an application is rejected; and



(3) Implement quality review measures to ensure that errors do not occur in mailings to applicants.



2. Multiple Filings for Foreign Spouses of U.S. Citizens

U.S. citizens petitioning for foreign spouses to join them in the United States are subject to duplicative filing requirements and will pay additional fees until the new fee rule takes effect in July 2007. In response to growing processing delays, Congress passed the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act in 2000, which created the K-3 visa category for foreign spouses of U.S. citizens to obtain a nonimmigrant visa and more quickly join their U.S. citizen spouses in the United States.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See section III.J.4.

⁶⁰ See generally Pub. L. No. 106-553, 114 Stat. 2762 (Dec. 21, 2000).