

## L. Green Cards Collected, Not Recorded, and Green Card Delivery Problems

In 2004, the Ombudsman learned of an issue regarding the recording of green cards that were returned to USCIS. These cards are returned to USCIS field offices and ASCs when an individual naturalizes or when the card is about to expire. Systems will reflect that the cards are still in circulation, unless updated to reflect that the cards were surrendered. This can have a negative impact on customers when they attempt to travel. The Ombudsman urged USCIS to update records several times, but it was not until May 2006 that USCIS informed the Ombudsman that the problem was resolved.

The Ombudsman remains concerned about the USCIS solution to the unrecorded green card dilemma and will continue to follow up with USCIS on the issue.

Other green card problems noted in past years continue. One major issue continues to be the delivery of a green card. Due to typographical errors in USCIS databases, green cards are sometimes sent to incorrect addresses. In other cases, due to a lack of connectivity, communication, and training, CBP officers sometimes record the USCIS Texas Service Center address (where green cards for arriving immigrants are produced) as the home address for new immigrants when they arrive at a port of entry. As a result, USCIS sends the newly produced card to itself. USCIS systems will reflect simply that the card was produced and mailed, but the applicant must pay an additional fee to replace the improperly sent card. To the Ombudsman's knowledge, USCIS has not implemented any procedure for redirecting these cards to the proper recipient.

As USCIS does not send green cards to individuals by certified mail with return receipt requested, USCIS is unable to verify that the applicant receives the card. This situation poses customer service and security concerns. As for customer service, applicants who do not receive their cards must file a new application and pay a fee, even where USCIS bears responsibility for the misdirected card. From a security perspective, individuals who want a second green card (to loan to family members or to sell) can claim that they have not received a card and then apply for a replacement. Without verification that the first card actually was received, USCIS has to produce a new one. The Ombudsman has heard of many instances of green card abuse. More importantly, the Ombudsman has heard of even more instances of honest applicants who are forced to pay additional fees because USCIS has failed them.

### *RECOMMENDATION AR 2006 -- 08*

*The USCIS Vermont Service Center suggested sending green cards by "return receipt requested," but USCIS Headquarters rejected this idea. The Ombudsman recommends that USCIS implement this simple solution. It requires a small expenditure up-front but would save significant time and resources, while enhancing customer service.*