



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS TODAY



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO T. GONZALEZ

Today, I begin a new journey with you at USCIS. It is an honor and a privilege to have been selected by President Bush to lead the USCIS team. I am grateful for this opportunity to help improve the path that our customers must travel. I am committed to our mission to keep America's doors well guarded against foreign threats and open to lawful immigrants.

The outstanding work of my predecessor, Director Eduardo Aguirre, and the countless contributions of dedicated employees has established a strong foundation and institutional framework at USCIS. In building on their achievements, the USCIS leadership team will look to use our current momentum to carry us forward and build upon what we have already accomplished.

My task now is to advance the exceptional achievements of the first two and a half years at USCIS. Moving forward, the progress we achieve will be won together, as a team. We will learn from our challenges and support each other to face future challenges with the same spirit and tireless determination that has brought our agency to where we stand today. Every member of the USCIS team shares these goals, and every employee shares responsibility for the successes we have realized and our brighter future ahead. I look forward to working with all of you to make the American immigration journey more secure, efficient, and meaningful.



Dr. Emilio T. Gonzalez takes the Oath of Office to become the new USCIS Director on January 4, 2006

JANUARY 2006

“New Year...New Beginnings”

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ABOUT DIRECTOR GONZALEZ

Prior to joining the Miami based international law firm of Tew Cardenas, Emilio T. Gonzalez, PH.D, was Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council, Washington, D.C. In this capacity he served as a key National Security and Foreign Policy advisor to President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Director Gonzalez completed a distinguished career in the U.S. Army that spanned twenty-six years. During this time he served as a military attaché to U.S. Embassies in El Salvador and Mexico, taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point and headed the Office of Special Assistants for the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Southern Command.

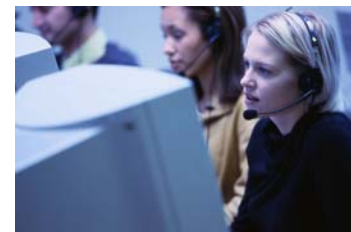
A graduate of the University of South Florida in Tampa with a B.A. in International Studies, Director Gonzalez also earned M.A. degrees in Latin American Studies from Tulane University in New Orleans, and in Strategic Studies and National Security Affairs from the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. In 2001, he was awarded a Ph.D. degree in International Relations from the University of Miami, Florida.

Visit USCIS.gov to view [Director Gonzalez's complete biography](#).

INTEGRITY . RESPECT . INGENUITY

USCIS TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

USCIS is preparing to modernize its business processes and adopt an online application system for specific form types. These technology upgrades are key aspects of the USCIS Transformation Program, a strategic blueprint to improve efficiency and strengthen safeguards against immigration fraud.



FROM PAPER FILES TO E-FILING

ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY AND IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

At the core of this new system is the creation of a customer-friendly, online account system. Set to replace the current paper-driven system, the new electronic filing procedures will allow individual applicants, employers, and designated representatives the ability to establish a permanent electronic profile and online account with USCIS. Easily accessible via the internet, these electronic accounts will allow USCIS customers to file for a variety of benefits, renewals and address updates, with the click of a mouse.

Similar to an online bank account, USCIS customers will be able to self-manage their account profiles and process a variety of immigration transactions in a secure, paperless environment. In addition to offering instant email confirmation of USCIS' receipt of important documents, the new system will allow customers to electronically process application payments via credit card. This process also improves efficiency through the creation of an electronic customer database and an archived record of all transactions, eliminating the need for customers to re-submit information already on file with USCIS.

Upon the creation of a USCIS account, customers will be required to submit biometric information one time at a USCIS Application Support Center. Collected biometrics will be electronically attached to customer accounts and a permanent identity number for each account will be created. This initial identification process will protect against fraud and illegal activity and enhance the accuracy of security checks.

In addition to enhancing the integrity of the processes, the collective benefits of the USCIS Transformation Program will leave less-margin for error and unnecessary case delays. USCIS welcomes your ideas and feedback as we move forward with modernization initiatives. Opportunities to comment on the notice regarding the most current phase of the USCIS Transformation Program posed to the Federal Register on 12/29/2005 are available here:

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/lawsregs/whatsnew.htm>

To view the actual draft forms to be used in the creation of customer online accounts for individuals, employers and representatives, and for examples of the type of information collection that USCIS would require from account holders to complete particular transactions, please visit USCIS' Paperwork Reduction Act Resource Center at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/pr/index.htm> and scroll down the page to USCIS Draft Public Use Forms.

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

[USCIS Reaches H-2B Cap for First Half of Fiscal Year 2006, 12/16/05](#)

USCIS announced that it has received a sufficient number of petitions to reach the congressionally mandated H-2B cap for the first six months of Fiscal Year 2006 (FY 2006). USCIS is hereby notifying the public that December 15, 2005 is the "final receipt date" for new H-2B worker petitions requesting employment start dates prior to April 1, 2006. The "final receipt date" is the date on which USCIS determines that it has received enough cap-subject petitions to reach the limit of 33,000 H-2B workers for the first half of FY 2006.





USCIS BRINGS NEWLYWEDS TOGETHER

Joely Brimmell, a Canadian citizen, was busy making flower arrangements, invitations and other preparations in the months before her wedding in Milwaukee, to her groom, Tim Minzell. But, just days before her wedding day, Joely was still in Canada, uncertain whether she would be allowed into the United States for her special day.

In March of 2005 Tim filed application I-129F to petition for his bride to immigrate to the United States and start their new life together. In mid-July, Joely contacted the Omaha District Office and spoke with Jim Johnson, RA&I Supervisor, who patiently listened to Joely's story about not having received updated information on the status of her case.

She was at her "wits end", as she told officer Johnson, since she had a significant guest list for her wedding and did not know what else to do. Although the case was not in the Omaha Office jurisdiction, Officer Johnson felt compelled to help this couple with their arrangements.

Jim's first step was to contact the Nebraska Service Center, where the case had been filed. Service Center employees Sadie Womble and Caroline Walker located the file and gave Joely's case top priority. As soon as additional evidence was received, the file was forwarded to the National Visa Center. Believing that her case was finally resolved, Miss Brimmell began her journey to the states, only to be denied entry at Toronto. She was now stranded in a hotel room in Toronto with a wedding less than a week away. Responding to a frantic phone call, Officer Johnson contacted District Director Jerry Heinauer who made the call to the Port Director and humanitarian parole was granted to Joely.

On August 20 in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin Timothy Mark Menzel and Joely Elizabeth Brimmell were married. They did not forget, however, the extra efforts made by USCIS to help Joely make it on time to her wedding. Among other acknowledgements on their wedding program is the following:

...a very special thank-you to Jim Johnson and Jerry Heinauer of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, who went to battle for us and believed in our cause. Without the hard work and effort of these exceptional men, we would not be standing together here today. We will be forever grateful... Tim & Joely



Jim Johnson



Jerry Heinauer

USCIS E-CALENDAR NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

USCIS begins 2006 with the release of new E-Calendar. The [2006 USCIS E-Calendar](#) includes significant dates in USCIS history and a listing of upcoming events. To keep you informed of the latest events and agency milestones, the E-Calendar will be updated on a consistent basis.

BY THE NUMBERS...BACKLOG ELIMINATION EFFORTS

The USCIS backlog decreased by approximately 40,000 applications in November, 2005. The decrease in the backlog was concentrated among the three major form types: N-400, I-485, and I-130. A primary reason for the decrease was an inventory conducted at Eastern Region offices, which revealed that pending counts for such cases had been overstated. However, a backlog has redeveloped for Form I-821 TPS in the amount of nearly 44,000 cases. Overall, the backlog continues to represent 27% of the total pending cases.

Although nearly 124,000 more cases were completed than received during November 2005, completions were nearly identical to October 2005 figures and were 9.2% short of the FY 2006 monthly Backlog Elimination Plan completions goal. Overall receipts in November '05 decreased by 15% from the preceding month. Receipts generally dropped across all the application types with Form I-485 Regular and Form N-400 experiencing drops of 25% and 11%, respectively.

| Date | Number of Backlog Cases |
|-----------|-------------------------|
| July | 1,129,708 |
| August | 999,220 |
| September | 1,003,869 |
| October | 1,004,849 |
| November | 963,671 |

FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS...

...UNIQUE STORIES

CESAR MUNOZ - MEXICO



Cesar receives his Naturalization Certificate from San Francisco District Director David Still

In the five years he's served in the U.S. Navy, Hospital Corpsman Cesar Munoz, age 23, hasn't stayed in any location very long. In that time, he has completed multiple postings overseas, in Fallujah, Iraq, Okinawa, Japan and a number of intensive training missions stateside. With the start of 2006, Cesar was due to be deployed abroad again, this time to Afghanistan with a Marine infantry unit, yet Cesar still wasn't a U.S. citizen.

A Mexican citizen living in the U.S. since age one, Cesar filed for citizenship when he turned 18, just after graduating from Clayton Valley High School, east of San Francisco. It's understandable that while he was stationed at so many different locations, his USCIS naturalization file just never seemed to catch up with him. At various times, his case was closed due to missed appointments, re-opened, and transferred to offices near his duty stations – San Francisco, San Diego, Honolulu. He passed a naturalization interview at San Diego office in 2003, but some of the necessary information had expired, and he was off on a new military adventure before he could be naturalized.

A plaintive phone call to San Francisco District's Section Chief for Naturalization, Robin Barrett, made by Munoz' mother, Elena, put his case in the fast lane. Elena Munoz' tearful voice mail message, received in September, touched Barrett's heart. Over a three-month period, Section Chief Barrett and Elena Munoz corresponded. Throughout, Barrett kept Cesar's file nearby, ready for his return to visit his family in the Bay Area.

When Mrs. Munoz called to say Cesar would be in the San Francisco area over the Christmas holiday, Barrett took action immediately and replied, "Just name the date, we'll swear him in on any day you choose." And so, on December 15, standing at attention before family, friends and news cameras, Munoz became a U.S. citizen in a private ceremony, administered by San Francisco District Director David Still. "You were willing to give the ultimate sacrifice in the name of a country that had yet to officially adopt you," Still said as Cesar raised his right hand to take the Oath of Allegiance.



Robin Barrett, USCIS

Originally interested in military intelligence, Munoz is now on track for a career in medicine. When his service is over in 2008, he hopes to begin studies leading to a career as an emergency room surgeon. Munoz is unflappable about the danger of his latest assignment, "I went over there once already, I'm more prepared than the average guy."

His mother, Elena, grateful for USCIS resolving Cesar's case before his departure also shared words of hope, "Last night was the first peaceful night of sleep I've had since I knew Cesar was going to Afghanistan. You've made a miracle, thank you so much!"

ARE YOU ONE OF THE "FACES OF AMERICA?"

[SUBMIT YOUR STORY TODAY](#)

WWW.USCIS.GOV

“HOW DO I...?”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS



HOW DO I...FIND AND FILE ELECTRONIC APPLICATIONS AND FORMS ON USCIS.GOV?

Do you want to file your benefits application from home, from work, from the coffee shop around the corner - anywhere with an Internet connection?

Would you like to pay your fees with a credit card or directly through your checking or savings account?

Do you want immediate confirmation that your application has been received by USCIS?

USCIS offers several convenient Electronic Filing (E-Filing) options for some of our most popular forms and applications. E-Filing is a quick, easy, and convenient alternative for you or your representative to complete, pay for, and submit applications to USCIS at anytime, from any computer with Internet access. E-Filing for immigration benefits with USCIS can ONLY be done through USCIS.gov.

To help guide you through the E-Filing process, USCIS has provided an [Online Catalog](#) of forms and form packages that are most commonly used to apply or petition for immigration benefits. Please see our [Introduction to E-Filing USCIS Forms](#) for more information.

Before being able to file your application online, you must register with USCIS.gov for an online account. To register for a new account, click on “[I am a new user](#)” on the [Log In to E-Filing](#) page. This registration is free, and allows you to create your own unique User ID and Password. Creating an E-Filing account allows you to submit forms electronically and save partially completed forms in your account profile for future use.

For detailed instructions on how to create a USCIS E-Filing account and other frequently asked questions about E-Filing, USCIS has provided a helpful [E-Filing Reference Guide](#) that includes graphics and directions for first time users.

Which applications and petitions may I submit through E-Filing?

Currently, the following applications and petitions may be submitted through E-Filing: (Click links for more information)

- [I-90 – Application to Replace Permanent Residence Card](#)
- [I-129 – Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker](#)
- [I-129S – Nonimmigrant Petition Based on Blanket L Petition](#)
- [I-131 – Application for Travel Document](#)
- [I-140 – Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker](#)
- [I-539 – Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#)
- [I-765 – Application for Employment Authorization](#)
- [I-821 – Application for Temporary Protected Status](#)
- [I-907 – Request for Premium Processing Service](#)

Some of these forms have eligibility restrictions for E-Filing, please see each application page for detailed eligibility information.

After you submit your application, USCIS will:

- Send you an official paper receipt, Form I-797, Notice of Action, within 5-10 days after receiving your application;
- Conduct Federal mandated background checks;
- Set up your case file;
- File any supporting documentation you send in to your case file;
- Electronically link any required biometric data transmitted from an ASC;
- Adjudicate your application to determine if your benefit will be granted.

USCIS does NOT give priority to E-Filing application submissions over paper-based application submissions. With an E-Filed or paper-based application submission, both will be processed in the same queue, manner, and date order in which USCIS receives the application.

The “How Do I...?” Section of USCIS Today contains answers to frequently asked questions from USCIS customers. Additional information and answers to other questions are available in both English and Spanish on the [How Do I...?](#) section of USCIS.gov

INTEGRITY . RESPECT . INGENUITY

REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROGRESS

USCIS RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

At the Denver District Office, they call Records Supervisor Judy Pettigrew “the unsung hero of the office,” according to acting District Director Mary Mischke. “Her dedication, knowledge and hard work make our success possible,” adds DD Mario Ortiz.

That's no surprise – Judy has lengthy experience in Records, starting in 1982, when she started working in medical records at an Army Hospital. Hired by INS 20 years ago to work in Records, Judy did a stint as a supervising status verifier, but returned to lead Records in '94.

Married for 41 years, with two sons, five grandchildren, and a great-grandchild, Judy and her husband Eddie, like to travel on such adventures as a riverboat cruise in Russia.



Name: Judy Pettigrew
Position: Records Manager
Location: Denver District

1) Please give some background about yourself and how you came to work at USCIS:

“I’ve been the Records Manager since '94. Before that, I was Supervisor in Status Verification, which is a similar job, starting in '89. I was hired in Nov '85 as a records clerk, went to Naturalization as a clerk, then to Records. I started my federal career at the Army Hospital as a medical records clerk in May '82; and spent about 10 months at the Veterans Administration hospital in the intensive care unit, as a ward clerk.”

2) What type of responsibilities do you have as Records Manager?

My job is to oversee the records office which includes handling incoming mail, the SAVE program and File maintenance. We open and distribute all mail that comes in to the Denver office including ICE, CBP and CIS, about 10 thousand pieces a month. For the Records part we request files for all bureaus and update NFTS and USCIS regarding file locations. We also review files for valid information and update our records if there are any changes. In the SAVE program we verify documents submitted by federal, state and local government agencies for benefits.

3) Which of your contributions to USCIS are you most proud of?

“What makes me proud is being able to help. I’ve helped a lot of people over the years, people who have had real problems finding out if they’re a citizen, or knowing they are but being unable to prove it. If someone calls me and says ‘I’ve talked to 12 other people,’ that’s the point where I say, ‘You can’t talk to anybody else. Let’s see what I can do to help you.’ I just had a case this week where some people were going on a cruise, and the wife needed a new passport. She thought she had her naturalization certificate in a safe place. But when she went to look, it wasn’t there. I did a letter on USCIS letterhead, saying she showed on our database as a citizen. I hope it works for her.”

4) What’s the most memorable moment you’ve experienced at USCIS?

“I remember an elderly man when I was working in Naturalization. He’d just been having a terrible time, trying to get a replacement naturalization certificate. It took a lot of detective work, but when I finally found him the information and we got him a replacement certificate, I remember the tears in his eyes. That was a proud moment.

4) How has USCIS changed since March 2003?

For me, it really hasn’t. I know there have been changes, but for us in Records, our clients are still the same. We still service CBP and ICE, and USCIS is probably 80% of our workload. I really like what I do, and I feel that I make a difference here. I like working with all the people we serve, and I get a lot of satisfaction out of this job.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

Visit [USAJOBS Online](https://www.usajobs.gov) for more information on openings and opportunities at USCIS and other federal agencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT USCIS OCOMM 202.272.1200