



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# USCIS TODAY



## A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO T. GONZÁLEZ

The new year brings us a moment to reflect upon our past accomplishments as well as an opportunity to focus on future work ahead of us in 2007. After an exciting year leading USCIS, I am poised to continue the work we have started to transform and modernize our national immigration system for the 21st century. Over the past year, USCIS has successfully eliminated a backlog of applications, created a new national security directorate and improved upon existing employment eligibility verification programs and online tools, all while processing more than 6 million new applications for immigration benefits.

**Backlog Elimination:** USCIS has eliminated case backlogs of applications for immigration services and benefits through a combination of increased employee productivity and reengineered processes and automated services. The backlog was reduced from 3.8 million cases in January 2004 to less than 10,000 at the end of September 2006.

**National Security and Records Verification Directorate:** To combat fraud and criminal activity, USCIS established the National Security and Records Verification Directorate, deploying hundreds of officers who specialize in the detection of fraudulent documentation and immigration scams to USCIS field offices and centers throughout the United States.

**Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification Program:** USCIS enrolled more than 12,500 employers and businesses in the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification Program. This program verifies the work authorization of more than one million new hires annually at more than 47,000 jobsites across the U.S. using a convenient online employment authorization system. While just a model for future processes, the current pilot program successfully verifies employee eligibility against Social Security Administration and DHS databases.

**Expanded Electronic Filing:** USCIS expanded opportunities for customers to file service or benefit applications electronically, and then track the status of their cases online through the new and improved [USCIS.gov](http://uscis.gov) Web site. To further simplify immigration processing, new biometric standards were developed that permit USCIS to digitally store fingerprints, photographs, and signatures, enabling rapid information sharing within USCIS offices for inter-agency action.

**Military Naturalizations:** USCIS naturalized members of the United States armed forces during special overseas ceremonies in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Kenya, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and in the South Pacific aboard the USS Kitty Hawk. This year, USCIS welcomed more than 1,604 new Americans during these ceremonies.

2006 was a busy year at USCIS and with the passage of immigration reform legislation expected in 2007, our agency will face new challenges. Our experience and our strength as a team will be tried like never before. Yet, despite the hurdles ahead of us, I maintain the faith that any obstacle we face in the new year will be met with the same resolve and determination shown time and again by the 15,000 USCIS employees and contractors working across the globe. Simply put, 2007 gives us a chance to shine in the spotlight. USCIS will get the job done and fulfill our mission to secure America's promise as a nation of immigrants by keeping America's doors open, but well guarded.

## JANUARY 2007 “Securing America’s Promise”

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USCIS: AMERICA’S IMMIGRATION SERVICE

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# USCIS: PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES



## OFFICERS IN EL PASO APPREHEND FUGITIVE

A man twice convicted of possessing a controlled substance was arrested after officers from USCIS officers discovered that his conviction rendered him inadmissible and eligible for deportation.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officers arrested Armando Ascencion Sandoval, of Mexico, after Sandoval filed an application to renew his alien registration card at the USCIS El Paso Office. The violation was uncovered following routine background checks that are conducted for every applicant requesting specific immigration services or benefits.

“Public safety is paramount to this agency,” said El Paso District Director Raymond Adams. “When we encounter someone in a USCIS office who has violated the law, we will work with our law enforcement partners to take the appropriate action.”

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE... FROM USCIS COMMUNICATIONS

[Public Notice: USCIS Announces Processing Changes for Waivers of the Foreign Residence Requirement of Section 212\(e\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act \(INA\) - 12/19/2006](#)



Beginning November 1, 2006, USCIS Nebraska, Texas and Vermont Service Centers began forwarding any new filings of Form I-612 to the California Service Center. This transfer is being implemented as part of ongoing USCIS initiatives to use centralized processing to streamline the adjudication process. It is not necessary for individuals who previously filed an I-612 to file a new application in connection with this change of procedure. New applicants seeking a waiver of the foreign residence requirement based on claims of exceptional hardship or persecution should continue to file Form I-612 with the Service Center having jurisdiction over the applicant’s place of residence, in accordance with the existing filing instructions.



## MEET YOUR USCIS: THE OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP

The Office of Citizenship is responsible for promoting instruction and training on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and providing immigrants with information and tools necessary to successfully integrate into American civic culture. Its primary focus is to provide information and resources to immigrants at two key points in their journey towards civic integration: when they first become permanent residents and when they are ready and eligible to begin the formal naturalization process.

### Strategic Objectives:

- Enhance information and educational opportunities provided to permanent residents to support their integration and participation in American civic culture.
- Promote education and training on citizenship rights, privileges, and responsibilities for immigrants interested in becoming U.S. citizens.
- Infuse citizenship-related ceremonies and events with greater meaning and stature.

For more information, visit the [Office of Citizenship homepage](#) on USCIS.gov.

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## USCIS: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY

# OUTSTANDING AMERICANS BY CHOICE

The newly launched *Outstanding American by Choice* initiative recognizes the outstanding achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to the country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans. Throughout the year, USCIS Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.



## DR. KIRAN PATEL - ZAMBIA

Kiran Patel was born in Zambia, Africa to Asian-Indian parents. He was educated under the British Educational System in Zambia. He later received his diploma from Cambridge University and The University of London. Dr. Patel returned to India to study medicine at the University of Gujarat and later did his Internship in Africa. Dr. Patel completed his residency in Internal Medicine in New Jersey in 1980, as well as an advanced specialization in the Cardiology from Columbia University.

After his move to Tampa, Florida in 1982, Dr. Patel began his practice in Cardiology. As a distinguished cardiologist, he developed a physician practice management company and expanded to the surrounding Tampa Bay area with 14 practices including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics and Cardiology.

In 1992, Dr. Kiran Patel, along with two other partners, began a Medicaid managed care company called Well Care HMO, Inc. This company became the largest Medicaid provider in the state of Florida. Dr. Patel worked with more than 95 hospitals and a few hundred physicians in settling past due medical claims.

Between 1995 and 2002, Dr. Kiran Patel built this business into a billion-dollar company, providing services to more than 450,000 members, employing more than 1,200 employees and operating in Florida, New York and Connecticut. In 2003, Dr. Patel was appointed by Florida's Governor to the University of South Florida Board of Trustees. In 2004, he and his wife, Dr. Pallavi Patel, were awarded the Cultural Contributor of the Year Award by the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Patel is presently serving as Chairman of Visionary Medical Systems. Dr. Patel also serves as the Chairman of the Patel Foundation for Global Understanding, a non-profit organization that develops and funds a wide variety of programs in health, education, arts and culture.



## THE NEW AND IMPROVED [USCIS.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

One of the most trafficked websites in the Federal government has a fresh new look. USCIS has replaced its old website with a new, more effective, redesigned Web Portal available at the same Internet address, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). The improved Web Portal will serve as a "one stop shop" for all immigration information needs. View and listen to a [quick message](#) from Director González introducing the new and improved U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services web portal.

Visitors to the "new" USCIS.gov will find it easier to download petitions and applications, file forms electronically using our [E-Filing Online Application Center](#), and sign up online for appointments at their local district offices using [INFOPASS](#). The new web portal and other electronic media have improved our ability to help applicants in a timely manner and better manage the agency's workload. Please refer to the [USCIS.gov Fact Sheet](#), for new links to your favorite USCIS online services. Don't wait in line...Go online!

[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)



# ADOPTED VALOR: IMMIGRANT HEROES

## FOREIGN BORN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

### PFC LEWIS ALBANESE- VIETNAM

According to one of his teachers at Franklin High School in Seattle, WA, Lewis Albanese was not a school leader or all-star athlete - just an average, well-behaved student. "He was just one of the boys who come and go and don't attract too much attention," said George Ehr Gott, Albanese's former woodshop and stage-crew teacher, "He would have made a fine citizen." His grades, were, on the whole, no better than average. "I don't recall anything unusual about him," Ehr Gott said, "but then, most of the best people never do get in the limelight until they do something like he did."

Born in Venice, Italy in 1946, Louie's parents came to the United States when he was just a toddler. He lived in the United States for 18 years before being drafted to serve in the Army and was in Vietnam for less than three months on December 1, 1966. While his platoon advanced through dense jungle terrain to assault an enemy position ahead, they began to receive intense automatic weapons fire from close range on both flanks. When other members maneuvered toward the objective, Pfc. Albanese was ordered to provide security for the left flank of the platoon.

As the platoon closed in on enemy positions, a continuous hail of fire came in from enemy strongpoints located in a well-concealed ditch in front of Albanese. Realizing the imminent danger to his comrades from this fire, Pfc. Albanese fixed his bayonet and moved aggressively into the ditch. His action silenced the sniper fire, enabling the platoon to resume movement toward the main enemy position.

As the platoon continued to advance, the sound of heavy firing increased on the left flank as a result of the pitched battle that ensued in the ditch which Pfc. Albanese had entered. The ditch was actually a well-organized complex of enemy defenses designed to bring devastating flanking fire on the forces attacking the main position. Pfc. Albanese, disregarding the danger to himself, advanced 100 meters along the trench and killed 6 of the snipers, who were armed with automatic weapons. Having exhausted his ammunition, Pfc. Albanese was mortally wounded when he engaged and killed 2 more enemy soldiers in fierce hand-to-hand combat.

His unparalleled actions saved the lives of many members of his platoon who otherwise would have fallen to the sniper fire from the ditch, and enabled his platoon to successfully advance against an enemy force of overwhelming numerical superiority. Pfc. Albanese's extraordinary heroism and supreme dedication to his comrades were commensurate with the finest traditions of the military service and remain a tribute to himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



Pfc. Albanese (above) and in Vietnam (right)



## 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.

### OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE, APPLY NOW!

**USCIS: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE**



## “HOW DO I...?”

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS

## HOW DO I... TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. AS AN ASYLUM APPLICANT, AN ASYLEE, OR A LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT WITH PREVIOUS ASYLEE STATUS?

Asylum applicants, asylees, and lawful permanent residents who obtained such status based on their asylum status are subject to special rules with regard to traveling outside the United States. This document describes the relevant statutes and regulations regarding traveling outside the United States as well as the consequences that could result if an asylum applicant, an asylee, or a lawful permanent resident who obtained such status based on his or her asylum status returns to his or her country of claimed persecution.

### **Travel Outside the United States**

- **Asylum Applicants:** An asylum applicant who leaves the United States without first obtaining advance parole shall be presumed to have abandoned his or her asylum application. Advance parole (see: USCIS Form I-131) allows certain aliens to return to the United States without a visa after traveling abroad. Asylum applicants must receive advance parole before leaving the United States. Advance parole does not guarantee that the alien will be paroled into the United States. Rather, the asylum applicant must still undergo inspection by an immigration inspector from United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP).
- **Asylees:** Asylees (individuals who have been granted asylum) may travel abroad with the prior approval of the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Such prior approval comes in the form of a refugee travel document. A refugee travel document is valid for one year and is issued to an asylee to allow his or her return to the United States after temporary travel abroad. Generally, the asylee should obtain the refugee travel document prior to departure from the United States, though the applicable regulations also permit the issuance of a refugee travel document abroad under certain circumstances. Like advance parole, a refugee travel document does not guarantee admission into the United States. Rather, the asylee must still undergo inspection by an immigration inspector from CBP.
- **Lawful Permanent Residents:** Lawful permanent residents who obtained such status based on their asylum status may also travel abroad with refugee travel documents.

### **Possible Consequences of Returning to the Country of Claimed Persecution**

An asylum applicant who leaves the United States without advance parole and returns to the country of claimed persecution shall be presumed to have abandoned his or her asylum application, unless the applicant is able to establish compelling reasons for the return. If an asylum applicant returns to his or her country of claimed persecution without advance parole, he or she should be prepared to explain the reason for the return.

Asylum status may be terminated for specific reasons as listed in INA § 208(c)(2). An individual's underlying asylum status may be terminated even if the individual has already become a lawful permanent resident. Returning to one's country of claimed persecution may be relevant to a number of termination grounds. For instance, asylum status could be terminated based on a fundamental change in circumstances in the asylee's country of persecution. Termination could also occur due to fraud in the asylum application such that the asylee was not eligible for asylum. Return to the country of feared persecution can, in some circumstances, be considered evidence that the asylee's alleged fear of persecution is not genuine.

In addition, termination of asylum status could occur if an "alien has voluntarily availed himself or herself of the protection of the alien's country of nationality . . . by returning to such country with permanent resident status or the reasonable possibility of obtaining such status with the same rights and obligations pertaining to other permanent residents of that country."

Accordingly, an asylee or a lawful permanent resident who obtained such status based on a grant of asylum status may be questioned about why he or she was able to return to the country of claimed persecution and, in some circumstances, may be subject to proceedings to terminate asylum status.



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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## IMMIGRANTS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

### VERA KATZ

#### MAYOR OF PORTLAND, OR

Vera Katz was born in Dusseldorf, Germany on August 3, 1933. In order to escape Nazi oppression, she and her family fled their homes in Germany for a journey to the United States. She arrived in the U.S. as a refugee in October 1940 and became a U.S. citizen on November 20, 1950. It's a day she'll always remember.

Katz began her political career working on the presidential campaign of Robert F. Kennedy in 1968 and later found herself drawn to a career in politics. In 1972 Katz was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives. In 1985 she was chosen as the first female speaker of the Oregon House.

While in the Oregon House, she sponsored the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, a landmark school reform bill. She also helped pass measures on gun control, as well as legislation prohibiting discrimination based on gender in places of public accommodation and credit.

In 1992, Ms. Katz was elected as Mayor of Portland, an office that she held for 12 years until retiring in December 2004. During her administration, Katz pursued an active policy of revitalization of the city's neighborhoods. She left office with a legacy of accomplishments, including the extension of light rail and city acquisition of Ross Island.

In June 2004, Mayor Katz was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of cancer that changed her life. Although she continued to work everyday, she also had to learn how to live differently, enduring chemotherapy, kidney dialysis, and changing her workaholic tendencies.

Today, as in the past, Vera Katz is in heavy demand and stays active with many social and civic engagements. She acts as an informal advisor to the Portland State University School of Urban Affairs and serves on many local boards and committees. Commenting on her retirement, syndicated newspaper columnist David Broder wrote in his December 26, 2004 column, "Feisty is what she remains as she winds up her twelve years as mayor this week and closes three decades of public service that mark her as one of the pioneers and pacesetters for the women's movement, education reform, health care and urban planning."

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## NATURALIZATION TEST PILOT

USCIS experts have worked diligently to design a new exam that is more meaningful, substantive, and fair. Led by the Office of Citizenship, USCIS will begin to administer the pilot exam to approximately 5,000 volunteer citizenship applicants in 10 cities nationwide, beginning February 2007.

USCIS included new questions that focus on the concepts of democracy and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In designing the new exam, USCIS received assistance and worked with test development contractors, U.S. history and government scholars, and English as a second language experts. USCIS also sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including immigrant advocacy groups, citizenship instructors and district adjudication officers. The range of acceptable answers to questions will increase so that applicants may learn more about a topic and select from a wider range of responses. In addition to new questions, USCIS will soon release a new civics-based vocabulary list to help applicants study for the English reading and writing portion of the proposed test.

The exam pilot program will allow USCIS to work out any problems and refine the exam before it is fully implemented nationwide in the spring of 2008. All of the new [Questions and Answers](#) are posted on [uscis.gov](#) and a [Naturalization Exam Pilot Fact Sheet](#) is also available.

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**USCIS: ENHANCING EFFICIENCY**

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# FACES OF AMERICA

## NEW CITIZENS, UNIQUE STORIES

### FLORENCE M.E. ROGERS – ENGLAND



Born and raised on the Isle of Wight off the coast of England, Florence Rogers arrived in the United States nearly 19 years ago with a briefcase containing 6 thousand dollars in travelers checks, her passport and a student visa. She slept with it for the first couple of days till she could get to a bank! Florence hoped the money would be enough to pay her way through school because she was ineligible to work.

With persistence and a little bit of luck, Florence managed to make it through a Masters program at San Diego State University and began a career in radio broadcasting. After many honors and accolades over the past decade, she was selected as the new president and general manager of Nevada Public Radio, one of the most prestigious not for profit organizations in the State. Her award-winning news and feature reports have aired nationally and internationally on NPR's Morning Edition, Weekend Edition, Day to Day, PRI's Studio 360 and The Savvy Traveler as well as the BBC World service and Voice of America.

This British native has found her home in the desert of Las Vegas, which she refers to as, "a place of dreams. For those who want to start over, or reinvent themselves, or live out vacation dreams...it's also home." Florence says that becoming a citizen, "Allows us to call this place home, and really feel it, for the first time. For those like me, that's a choice that I'm privileged to have." Florence credits her success to her surroundings, calling "Las Vegas Nevada in the United States of America," the place that made her career in radio broadcasting possible, and turned her dreams into reality.

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, Florence took the Oath of Allegiance and became a United States Citizen. Looking back on her ceremony, she recalled, "This really was a very emotional experience - much more so than I anticipated. Everyone at USCIS has been so professional and efficient through this entire process, they really did exceed my expectations of how this would go."

**ARE YOU ONE OF THE FACES OF AMERICA?  
[SHARE YOUR STORY WITH USCIS](#)**

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## ON ANY GIVEN DAY AT USCIS...

...the **15,000** federal and contract employees of USCIS accomplish the following at our **250** offices worldwide:

- Answer phone inquiries from **82,000** calls to our toll-free customer service phone line
- Process **30,000** applications for immigrant benefits
- Naturalize **20** individuals serving in the United States military

Check the next issue of [USCIS Today](#) or the [USCIS Day in the Life](#) profile for more statistics on what we do every day to effectively and efficiently administer our nation's immigration system.

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**USCIS AND DHS: SECURING OUR HOMELAND**