



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS ACTING DIRECTOR JOCK SCHARFEN

MAY 2008 “Securing America’s Promise”

[A Message from USCIS Acting Director Scharfen](#)

[News You Can Use](#)

[Congressional Relations Update](#)

[Iraqi Refugee Processing](#)

[USCIS and ICE Stop Marriage Fraud](#)

[Construction Corner](#)

[Outstanding Americans by Choice](#)

[Adopted Valor](#)

[“How Do I?” Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Faces of America](#)

[Improvements to E-Verify](#)

[Would You Like to Work at USCIS?](#)

Last month, former USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez [discussed](#) an editorial printed in *The New York Times* about USCIS’ recent application backlog - and it generated more interest from readers than any other [DHS Leadership Journal](#) entry to date, both in terms of the numbers of readers and posted comments.

I am not surprised. We all appreciate that immigration benefits granted by USCIS, including citizenship, employment authorization, and permanent residency for immigrants and their families, are incredibly important to you - our customers and stakeholders - and our nation. We also know that our business processes are not always transparent or easily understood—they are admittedly complex.

Many comments dealt with the surge in applications that took place after USCIS announced its new fees. After a long, in-depth review of our financial situation, [we increased our fees last summer](#). We had to. USCIS is almost completely funded by fees, and the agency was not meeting its obligations or operating costs under the old fee structure.

To meet those obligations, we needed to invest in new facilities and technology and build our staff to improve the service our customers deserve, knowing it would take some time to accomplish. These things do. We needed to ensure funds were actually coming in the door before hiring thousands of new employees or making investments in technology.

We expected an increase in filings prior to the fee increase, but not nearly the volume of filings we received. Now that the fee increase is generating needed revenue, [we’re hiring and training](#) 1,334 new adjudications officers and 521 new support staff – totaling 1,855 new USCIS employees, many of whom are already on board. We’ve shifted existing employees where that made sense and moved work where capacity was available. We are rehiring retired, experienced employees, and are developing new facilities to better serve customers. We’re even conducting interviews, where needed, on Saturdays, Sundays and after normal business hours.

At the same time, we’ve [embarked on a joint plan with the FBI](#) to eliminate the name check backlog. By providing additional funds to increase the FBI’s capacity to conduct name checks, we’ll eliminate the name check backlog by the end of next summer. As a result of these combined efforts, we are now naturalizing new citizens at record levels. But just as important as what we are doing to address the surge in naturalization applications is what we are not doing: we are not compromising quality or national security in processing these increased applications.

I encourage readers to frequently check the [DHS Leadership Journal](#) for important updates and communications from agency officials.

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

FROM USCIS COMMUNICATIONS

[Fact Sheet: Naturalization Through Military Service](#) - 05/16/2008

[USCIS Settles Kaplan Class Action](#) - 05/15/2008

[Fact Sheet: USCIS Issues Revised Guidance on the Applicability of the Child Status Protection Act \(CSPA\)](#) - 05/06/2008



[USCIS Announces Proposal to Increase Periods of Stay for TN Professional Workers From Canada or Mexico](#) - 05/06/2008

[USCIS Issues Revised Guidance on Child Status Protection Act \(CSPA\)](#) - 05/06/2008

[USCIS Modifies Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record](#) - 04/29/2008

[USCIS Modifies Application for Employment Authorization](#) - 04/24/2008

[Fact Sheet: USCIS Issues Guidance For Approved Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\) Self-Petitioners](#) - 04/22/2008

[USCIS to Allow F-1 Students Opportunity to Request Change of Status](#) - 04/18/2008

[USCIS Runs Random Selection Process For H-1B Petitions](#) - 04/14/2008



CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS UPDATE

ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR MIKE AYTES TESTIFIES ON USCIS' ROLE IN THE VISA PROCESS

Acting Deputy Director Mike Aytes testified before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law on April 30th for a hearing on USCIS' role in the Visa Process. This hearing focused on recapturing employment- and family-based visas through legislation. Both the Department of State and USCIS discussed the operational changes in recent years to maximize the use of the limited number of visas available annually. Mr. Aytes stressed that today's partnership between USCIS and DOS will provide the blueprint for continued success in managing visa allocations.

"To maximize visa number usage while working off its backlog, USCIS has adopted a production strategy that focuses on completing cases where visas are immediately available and on working cases to the point just short of approval (pre-adjudication) where visas will be available in the coming months," Aytes testified. "Pre-adjudication includes completing all required background checks and resolving all eligibility issues except for visa availability."

[Acting Deputy Director Mike Aytes full testimony](#) is available at USCIS.gov in addition to previous statements, press releases and testimony released by the [USCIS Office of Communications](#).

USCIS: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY



IRAQI REFUGEE PROCESSING UPDATE

DHS and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) are streamlining the process for admitting Iraqi refugees to the U.S. while at the same time ensuring the highest level of security. Since May 2007, DHS and DOS have worked cooperatively to administer the overseas component of the U.S. refugee admissions program (USRAP).

USRAP is an inter-agency effort involving a number of governmental and non-governmental partners, both overseas and domestically, whose mission is to resettle refugees in the United States. In the last year, USRAP expanded its capacity dramatically to consider Iraqi refugees for resettlement.

- Since the program began last spring, a total of 26,904 Iraqi individuals have been referred to USCIS for resettlement. USCIS has interviewed a total of 17,006 Iraqi refugees, and as of May 14, 2008, a total of 5,763 Iraqi refugees have been welcomed to the United States.

In Jordan and Egypt, access to USRAP is available to direct-hire employees of the U.S. Mission in Iraq and other Iraqis who worked for the U.S. Government or U.S. Government contractors, or for U.S.-based media organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Any Iraqi who has fled to Jordan or Egypt because of his/her association with the U.S. is encouraged to contact the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to receive guidance. IOM can be reached in Jordan at AmmanInfoCenter@iom.int and Egypt at CairoInfoCenter@iom.int. Please visit the DOS/PRM website: www.state.gov/g/prm/ for additional information.

USCIS AND ICE UNCOVER MARRIAGE FRAUD RINGS

Officers within the USCIS Office of Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents combined their efforts in uncovering two separate marriage fraud operations operating in Dallas and Tampa.

The Dallas investigation was headed by ICE's local Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force, which includes USCIS FDNS officers. These task forces are specially trained and equipped to identify and target marriage fraud. The 29-count indictment includes various charges against 16 people including conspiracy to commit fraud; misusing visas, permits, and other documents; Social Security number fraud; and aggravated identity theft. The alleged conspiracy involved a complex and organized deception to make the fraudulent marriages appear legitimate. Couples filed their applications for permanent residence with USCIS using fraudulently obtained legitimate documents that showed their marriages were valid.

As a result of diligence and close scrutiny of marriage package applications by USCIS Orlando, Tampa, and Jacksonville Field Office employees, more than 80 people in Central and Northern Florida were arrested in May on charges related to filing fraudulent immigration benefit applications.

Both foreign nationals and U.S. Citizens were paying as much as \$10,000 to marriage fixers, who orchestrated an illegal scheme to complete the applications required for permanent residency and provide wedding gowns and staged photographs. Those involved went so far as to provide a wedding cake and table settings that were never used at faked wedding receptions. The marriage fixers also coached the applicants on how to pass the immigration interview by providing fraudulent answers to questions raised during the adjustment of status interviews. Many of the couples didn't even share a common language and often times an interpreter was used.



USCIS: VIGILANCE, HONESTY, INTEGRITY

OUTSTANDING AMERICANS BY CHOICE

The [Outstanding American by Choice](#) initiative recognizes the 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, Acting Director Scharfen will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.



GENERAL JOHN L. FUGH (RET.)

John L. Fugh was born in Beijing, China. He was 15 when he migrated to the United States with his family. General Fugh was The Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, retiring from that post in July 1993 as a Major General.

The Judge Advocate General manages the Army's worldwide legal organization, consisting of 4,700 active duty, reserve and civilian lawyers, more than 5,000 paralegal and administrative personnel. He was the first Chinese American to attain general officer status in the U.S. Army.

General Fugh is Chairman of the Committee of 100, a national, non-partisan group of prominent Chinese Americans who brings a bicultural perspective to U.S. relations with China and addresses the concerns of Americans of Chinese/Asian descent. In addition, he serves on the Executive Committee and as a director of the Atlantic Council of the United States. General Fugh graduated from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and the George Washington University Law School. He attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the U.S. Army War College, and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He is a member of the Bar of the District of Columbia.



ROSARIO MARIN

Rosario Marin was born in Mexico and has been a naturalized citizen since 1984. Currently, she serves in Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's cabinet as Secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency where she oversees the state's civil rights enforcement, consumer protection, and the licensing of 2.4 million Californians in more than 255 different professions.



Appointed by President George W. Bush and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Ms. Marin served as the 41st Treasurer of the United States where she had oversight of the U.S. Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. She championed the U.S. Treasury's financial literacy outreach program focusing especially on the 10 million unbanked Americans. In addition, she served on the White House Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. In 1995, for her tireless work on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities, Ms. Marin was awarded the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Prize at the United Nations. She was only the second person to receive the honor. She is a former member of the Special Olympics International Board of Directors and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. She has also been an appointed California Film Commissioner.

NEW USCIS FIELD OFFICE OPENS IN RALEIGH, NC



Acting Director Jock Scharfen participated in the official office opening and ribbon cutting for the Raleigh-Durham, NC Field Office location on Friday April 26. Joining Acting Director Scharfen were Congressmen David Price, Bob Etheridge and Brad Miller of North Carolina's congressional delegation.

Former USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez, along with Congressman Price, participated in the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Raleigh Office on June 4, 2007. Less than one year later, the 21,500 square foot office was completed with the capacity to receive 400 applicants each day. Previously, residents of eastern North Carolina had to travel to the USCIS Office in Charlotte. The combination of a growing immigrant population and the lack of adequate service locations made Raleigh a logical choice as home of one of the first new USCIS Field Offices.

The new facility is a full service office, and will serve the people of Eastern North Carolina from a location just off Interstate 40 and 10 minutes from the airport. This facility will host a full-suite of immigration services to the public, from fingerprints to naturalization, all in one stop. This investment is evidence of USCIS efforts to put down permanent roots in communities, by getting closer to the people we serve and more in-touch with the unique needs of every locality. The agency is on track to renovate or replace about a dozen domestic office locations a year.

Following the ribbon cutting ceremony, Acting Director Scharfen administered the *Oath of Allegiance* to more than 25 immigrant service members in the newly opened Naturalization Room at the Raleigh office. During this ceremony, Acting Director Scharfen called attention to the courageous story of [Sergeant Matej Kocak](#), an immigrant member of our Armed Forces who posthumously received the Medal of Honor.



CONSTRUCTION CORNER USCIS FACILITIES COMING SOON

Located on a prominent corner of Corporate Centre Boulevard and Lee Vista Boulevard and surrounded by a nature preserve, this new location for the Orlando Field Office is a beautiful, easily accessible setting for the employees and visitors.

The building's construction is on schedule for completion in October 2008. Exterior work is almost complete and final windows are being installed. Interior work currently involves the installation of drywall partitions, ceiling grid, and flooring.

This building will achieve many environmental goals for new construction. A white rooftop is utilized to decrease the heat gain of Florida's strong sun. Solartubes and roof monitors penetrate the rooftop throughout the internal areas of the building to allow for natural lighting to all occupants. The new Orlando Field Office will offer a secure, environmentally friendly, state-of-the-art full service office, designed to support the agency's mission of providing excellent service to the greater Orlando area.



ADOPTED VALOR: IMMIGRANT HEROES

FOREIGN BORN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

SERGEANT MATEJ KOCAK - WWI

Sergeant Matej Kocak was born in Austria, near the Czechoslovakian Hungarian border in 1882. He emigrated to the United States in 1906, and on October 16 of the following year, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and began an 11-year career at stationed at League Island, Pennsylvania. He was discharged on October 16, 1911 at the expiration of his first enlistment, but reenlisted at New York City two months later on December 26, and was assigned to the Navy Yard, New York.

During his second enlistment, he served with the U.S. Army at Vera Cruz, Mexico, from April to November, 1914. This enlistment ended in December 1915, but he again reenlisted and transferred to the Marine Naval Station, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The following year, he was ashore in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, where he participated in skirmishes with native bandits at Las Canitas, Azua Province. Promoted to Corporal in March 1917, he then returned to the United States where he joined the 12th Company at Quantico, Virginia.

But by the beginning of 1918, Kocak was again overseas, this time at St. Nazaire, France with the 66th Company, Fifth Marine Regiment. After a promotion to Sergeant, Kocak took part in the attack against the enemy in Bois De Belleau Bouresches sector northwest of Chateau Thierry, France and on July 18, 1918, he participated in the attack at Villers Cotteret Wood south of Soissons, France.

During this operation, when his battalion's advance was checked by a hidden machine gun nest, Kocak went forward alone, unprotected and without covering fire from his own men, and worked in between the German position in the face of fire from an enemy detachment. Locating the machine gun nest, he rushed it, and with his bayonet drove off the crew. Shortly after this, he organized 25 French colonial soldiers, who had become separated from their company, and led them in attacking another machine gun nest, which was also put out of action.

For these heroic actions, Sergeant Kocak posthumously received the Medal of Honor after he was killed in action on October 4, 1918 at the Battle of Blanc Mont Ridge in France. He is buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne, France.



Matej Kocak
Rank: Sergeant
Branch: USMC
Nation of Birth: Austria

USCIS HAS NATURALIZED MORE THAN 37,250 MEMBERS OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES, AND 111 FALLEN HEROES HAVE BEEN GRANTED POSTHUMOUS CITIZENSHIP SINCE SEPTEMBER 2001.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE THE [USCIS FACT SHEET ON MILITARY NATURALIZATIONS](#)



“How Do I...?”

KNOW WHAT USCIS SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME AFTER I FILE MY APPLICATION OR PETITION

While our primary focus is on processing applications and petitions, we still offer a variety of services after you file.

Out of fairness to all of our customers, we process cases that are the same type based on the order in which they were filed. We will notify you, usually by mail, when we make a decision on your case, or if we need something from you.

Want an idea of how long it will take us to process your case? The easiest way to monitor [processing times is on our website](#), where we post the filing dates of cases that we are now completing. We list this information for each kind of case and for every USCIS office and service center. This lets you project when USCIS will complete your case.

As you use this information, keep in mind that this processing time is not only a projection of how long it will take to process your case from start to finish. It is a projection of how long it will take to process cases that were filed before yours, and then process yours. Processing times can change as we process cases. We update our information as we process cases. So, if you don't hear from us within the processing time based on what we are completing now, just check our website, or call customer service for updated processing time information.

Most of the time a case is pending we will be working on other cases filed earlier. But many customers still want to be able to track the processing of their case. So, we assign receipt numbers to each case that we process in our service centers and, in fact, to most new cases. The receipt number is simply an inventory control number assigned to a case. It starts with three letters, such as “VSC,” and then has a series of numbers. If your case was assigned a receipt number, you will find it on the receipt notice or biometrics appointment notice that we mail you about the case.

You can use your receipt number to [check your case status online](#), or when you call customer service, to get basic case status information from our automated systems to supplement the information about processing times. With your receipt number, you can also register on our website to get automatic case status updates as we process your case.

The processing times that we publish let you estimate how long it will take us to process cases filed before yours, and then process your case. Every case is different and sometimes an individual case can take longer than average. If you don't hear from us within the normal processing time, check for updated processing times on our website.

If your case has a receipt number, use it to check on the status of your case at the same time. We recommend this action on your part because our notice may be on its way to you.

If at any point your case should become more than 30 days outside our normal processing time, and you haven't received a written decision or update from us within the last 60 days, you can help us by calling customer service and letting us know. We will research your case, see what needs to be done to get it processed, and get back to you with an explanation.

If you filed a [Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization](#), and it has been longer than 90 days since you filed and you haven't gotten an update from us within the last 60 days, and have not seen any public notice regarding your case type, please don't wait the extra 30 days. Call customer service immediately.

Understanding the circumstances that cause certain types of applications to be filed, we also have a premium processing program that lets you judge your own circumstances and decide if you want to pay for faster processing. We know that circumstances can change, so this program is available even after you file. At this time, this program is only available for most kinds of temporary worker petitions (filed on [Form I-129](#)). For more information, see our website, or call customer service.

We understand the effects our processing times can have on customers, and we are working hard to shorten processing time. When Premium Processing is not available, we will consider taking a case out of order if there is a life or death emergency and our processing the case out of order will have a direct effect on the situation. We are very restrictive in granting this kind of preferential treatment, because it means other customers have to wait longer.

By definition, most kinds of applications and petitions rarely, if ever, merit this kind of preferential treatment. But if you believe such a situation exists when you file a case, or develops while your case is pending, call customer service for information about how to request accelerated processing, and about what documents and evidence you will have to submit to show that a “life or death” emergency exists.

FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS...UNIQUE STORIES



The first naturalization ceremony held at the Bronx Zoo honored Arbor Day on April 25. Twenty adults and 22 children from 16 different countries were naturalized at the Flamingo Overlook at the Dancing Crane Pavilion.

On May 9, the Chicago office held a special ceremony for a group of individuals who are hearing impaired. There were a total of six new citizens, four from Poland, one from Mexico and one from Pakistan. The local office worked closely with the Deaf Adults Educational Access Program to identify hearing impaired applicants in order to provide the proper accommodations.



Three-hundred sixty-five applicants from the Plano, TX area became citizens on May 13 during a naturalization ceremony at the Plano Convention Center. Danya Salina Vallette sang the national anthem while U.S. District Judge Richard A. Schell administered the *Oath of Allegiance*. U.S. Magistrate Judge Don D. Bush gave congratulatory remarks to the new Americans who hailed from 65 nations.



PROJECTED NATURALIZATION PROCESSING TIMES AT LOCAL OFFICES

EVERY DAY, USCIS
WELCOMES MORE
THAN 2,100 NEW
CITIZENS.

[Click here for a Complete Listing of Projected Processing Times for all USCIS Field Offices](#)

USCIS released projected times for local offices to complete processing of applications for citizenship from individuals who filed during the summer of 2007. USCIS is hiring and training hundreds of additional immigration officers to adjudicate these cases. The agency is also conducting naturalization interviews on weekends, after normal business hours and in additional locations. The processing times listed below provide a sense of how quickly a case may be processed if there are no complicating factors.

Office	Months	
Albany, NY.....	7.2	Memphis, TN.....9.8
Albuquerque, NM.....	8.7	Milwaukee, WI.....6.8
Atlanta, GA.....	9.9	Oklahoma City, OK.....8.6
Boston, MA.....	9.9	Omaha, NE.....5.8
Buffalo, NY.....	6.4	Pittsburgh, PA.....6.0
Chicago, IL.....	8.6	Portland, ME.....7.3
Cleveland, OH.....	7.5	Reno, NV.....7.3
Columbus, OH.....	7.4	Sacramento, CA.....7.8
Denver, CO.....	8.2	San Antonio, TX.....9.8
Detroit, MI.....	8.0	San Diego, CA.....9.1
Helena, MT.....	5.0	San Francisco, CA.....8.6
Honolulu, HI.....	6.8	Seattle, WA.....9.8
Jacksonville, FL.....	7.6	St Paul, MN.....8.6
		West Palm Beach, FL.....9.0

NEW ENHANCEMENTS TO EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION



USCIS has made improvements to the E-Verify employment authorization program that will reduce an already low mismatch rate, while also streamlining and increasing the effectiveness of the overall program. This is the first two phases of an overall three-part enhancement for E-Verify aimed at decreasing the mismatch rate for naturalized citizens.

"We believe every employee who is authorized to work in the United States should be instantly authorized by the program," said USCIS Acting Director Jonathan Scharfen. "We're confident that these enhancements will help us achieve that goal."

The E-Verify system will include naturalization data, which will help instantly confirm the citizenship status of naturalized U.S. citizens hired by E-Verify employers. Naturalized citizens who have not yet updated their records with the Social Security Administration (SSA) are the largest category of work-authorized persons who initially face an SSA mismatch in E-Verify. Additionally, a naturalized citizen who receives a citizenship mismatch with SSA can call USCIS directly to resolve the issue (in addition to the option of resolving the mismatch in person at any SSA field office.)

E-Verify also will now include real time arrival data from the Integrated Border Inspection System. This additional data source will reduce the number of immigration status related mismatches for newly arriving workers who have entered the country legally. USCIS also plans to initiate citizenship status records information sharing with SSA to further prevent tentative non-confirmations from occurring. This effort will improve the efficiency of E-Verify by providing to SSA with the most accurate and timely citizenship status information. E-Verify also plans to check against Department of State passport records in the near future to even further reduce mismatches.

- Almost 70,000 employers participate in the E-Verify Program with approximately 1,000 new enrollments weekly.
- The Web-based system allows participating employers to quickly and conveniently verify the employment eligibility of newly-hired employees using SSA and DHS electronic databases.
- E-Verify evolved from the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification Program originally developed in 1997 and made available to employers as a Web-based system in 2004. USCIS operates the program in partnership with SSA.

Additional details on the program are available through the [E-Verify Web Page](#) and a [Statement for the Record](#) submitted by USCIS to the House Ways and Means Committee.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

[USCIS Career Descriptions](#)

[Prep Guide for Adjudication Officers and Applications Adjudication Test Battery](#)

[Special Programs at USCIS](#)

[Federal Employment Benefits at USCIS](#)

[Current job openings at USCIS](#)

How would you like to work for an agency that changes lives everyday, invests time and money into the career development and growth of its employees, and comprises a diverse workforce providing unique opportunities? USCIS offers all that and more! Contribute to the USCIS mission to maintain the integrity of our Nation's immigration system and build on America's promise and foundation as a beacon of hope and liberty.

**OPPORTUNITIES ARE
AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE,
APPLY NOW!**

USCIS: SECURING AMERICA'S PROMISE