



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# USCIS TODAY



A MESSAGE FROM  
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
ROBERT DIVINE

Over the past few weeks, I have been impressed by USCIS employees who have pulled together to help our country and our customers recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Many of our dedicated employees across the country immediately volunteered in impressive numbers to assist in the recovery effort.

Our employees are now working at various locations such as: DHS Headquarters; FEMA disaster recovery centers across the country; and as legal advisors to officials and customers in the affected areas. They also have volunteered in countless personal ways, including donations of money, supplies and housing.

All USCIS employees, regardless of their volunteer status, are playing a critical role in the recovery effort. By accommodating necessary business changes, we are helping our customers receive the immigration help required to rebuild their lives. Together, with determination and compassion, USCIS, DHS and the people of the Gulf Coast will overcome this tragedy and rebuild our communities, repair our spirits and renew our lives.

## OCTOBER 2005

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## USCIS CONTINUES OPERATIONS AFTER HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

All USCIS employees are playing a critical role in the recovery efforts. By accommodating new business procedures, we are helping our customers receive the immigration help required in this time of need:

- Customers from the affected areas have been invited to seek immediate immigration assistance at any Application Service Center in the country.
- USCIS Offices are working with the court systems to accommodate naturalization applicants outside normal jurisdictions.
- The National Customer Service Center has been providing immigration assistance and direction to displaced customers at 1-800-375-5283.

For the latest information regarding immigration services available to USCIS customers, visit:  
<http://uscis.gov/graphics/katrina.htm>

- Service Centers quickly changed their procedures to ensure that thousands of pieces of mail, including green cards, were not sent to addresses that could not accept mail.
- The National Records Center has recovered the immigration files from the New Orleans office, and is developing a procedure to have those files available upon request for offices assisting hurricane evacuees.
- USCIS employees have been deployed to impacted areas to reach out personally to our customers.

**INTEGRITY . RESPECT . INGENUITY**

## NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT OFFICE RECOVERY EFFORTS



In a building without electricity or water, USCIS employees worked for eight hours through extreme heat and pitch-black conditions. By using an improvised system of planks and cables, more than 4,000 files and records were moved down eight flights of stairs and by truck to Memphis.



USCIS salutes these dedicated men and women, many of whom experienced personal loss after Katrina, for their sacrifice and commitment to the USCIS mission. By putting their own needs aside to help quickly restore USCIS operations in the District, their actions helped countless thousands of customers.

## USCIS IMPLEMENTS NEW PROGRAM TO IMPROVE SECURITY PARTNERSHIP WITH DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Recently the USCIS Nebraska Service Center (NSC) became the first USCIS entity to obtain access to the Department of State (DOS) Office of Foreign Missions database containing G4 (International Organizations Employees) and A (Diplomats) data.

This new tool was made possible by an agreement signed between DOS and USCIS Service Center Operations. Access to the DOS database will enable the NSC to produce high quality and secure immigration benefits for employees of International Organizations, such as the World Bank Group, IMF and the United Nations.

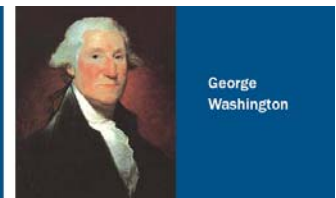


According to USCIS Acting Deputy Director Robert Divine, "Access to the DOS database will help combat immigration fraud and abuse involving employees of international organizations and foreign diplomats."

USCIS Service Centers, located in Vermont, Texas, California, and Nebraska were established to handle mail, filing, data entry, and adjudication procedures for a majority of the applications received by USCIS.

**“SECURING AMERICA’S PROMISE”**

# USCIS INTRODUCES CIVICS FLASH CARDS



Released by the Office of Citizenship, these Civics Flash Cards contain 96 questions designed to improve understanding of U.S. history and government. USCIS customers applying for citizenship can use these flash cards as a study tool to prepare for the naturalization exam.

Teachers and volunteers can also use these flash cards in the classroom in conjunction with a Quick Civics Lessons workbook that provides short lessons based on the questions found on the naturalization exam. This additional information is intended to help naturalization applicants gain a deeper understanding of U.S. history and government as they prepare to become citizens.

An [online web-based version](#) of the flash cards and workbook is available, and printed versions can be purchased through the [U.S. Government Printing Office](#) (GPO).

## USCIS CITIZENSHIP DAY PHOTO GALLERY

### MORE THAN 2,000 NEW AMERICANS NATURALIZED

More than 2,000 men, women and children raised their right hands and became America's newest citizens during special Citizenship Day ceremonies during the week of September 13<sup>th</sup> hosted by USCIS across the United States. Read [Senator Lamar Alexander's speech](#) to new citizens at the Jefferson Memorial, and [Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao's remarks](#) for a naturalization ceremony on Ellis Island.



Washington, D.C.



Ellis Island, New York



Tucson, Arizona



Gilbert, Arizona

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# FACES OF AMERICA

## NEW CITIZENS, UNIQUE STORIES



Margaret Mak celebrates American Citizenship with her son Michael

Living on the tiny Asian island of Singapore, Margaret Mak came to the United States to study Finance at San Francisco's Golden Gate University. Like many other talented foreign students who travel to the U.S. for higher education, Margaret started a new life in America. "I came here to study," Mak said, "But love and patriotism got me to stay."

Love for her husband, David Lichtman, and their son, Michael, now 11, and an appreciation for the unique liberties and freedoms enjoyed by every American combined to make Margaret one of our newest citizens. "Inalienable rights for everyone is a foreign concept for women in Singapore," Mak said. "America gave me freedom of thought."

Yet, despite her newfound sense of independence, Margaret wasn't sure what to expect during her road to citizenship, "You hear that immigration people are tough," Margaret recalls. "But the officer was so welcoming. I hired a lawyer, but I told him to help someone who needed it. I could do this myself."

A successful private banker working in the San Francisco area, Margaret became a U.S. citizen at a special outdoor naturalization ceremony at the Immigrant Point Overlook in San Francisco's Presidio.

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ARE YOU ONE OF THE  
"FACES OF AMERICA?"

[SUBMIT YOUR STORY TODAY](#)

## USCIS ONLINE PRODUCTS...TOOLS YOU CAN USE!!!

New Immigrant Orientation Guide: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/welcomeguide/index.htm>

"How Do I...?" Series Factsheets: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/factsheet/index.htm>

Citizenship Test Flash Cards: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/flashcards/index.htm>

E-Filing Online Application Center: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/eFiling.htm>

The USCIS Strategic Plan: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/aboutus/repstudies/USCISSTRATEGICPLAN.pdf>

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## USCIS...A DAY IN THE LIFE

Every day, more than **15,000** federal and contract USCIS employees accomplish the following at our **264** offices worldwide:

- Process **30,000** applications for immigrant benefits
- Answer in-person inquiries from **19,000** visitors to information counters at **92** local offices
- Capture **8,000** sets of fingerprints at **130** Application Support Centers

Check the November issue or [CLICK HERE](#) for more statistics on what we do every day to effectively and efficiently administer our nation's immigration system.

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## DON'T WAIT IN LINE...GO ONLINE!!!

Make an appointment using [USCIS' Internet Appointment System: INFOPASS](#)

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"SECURING AMERICA'S PROMISE"

# NEWS YOU CAN USE...

## FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



### [Fact Sheet: El Salvadoran Temporary Protected Status Re-registration and the Issuance of Employment Authorization Documents \(EADs\), 9/9/05](#)

This Fact Sheet provides guidance to immigrants from El Salvadoran who have Temporary Protected Status regarding the Re-registration and the Issuance of Employment Authorization Documents. [This document is also available in Spanish](#)

### [USCIS Notifies I-90 Applicants of Process Change, 9/8/05](#)

USCIS announced changes to the Form I-90 filing process to correct previous USCIS errors on an expedited basis without charging applicants an additional filing fee.

### [DHS Announces 12-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status for Burundi, 9/2/05](#)

DHS announced an 18-month extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Sudan until November 2, 2006.

### [DHS Announces an 18-Month Extension of Temporary Protected Status for Sudan, 9/2/05](#)

DHS announces an 18-month extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Sudan until May 2, 2007.

## USCIS ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO FEE STRUCTURE FOR IMMIGRATION BENEFITS

USCIS is one of the largest fee-funded agencies in the Federal government – charging fees for a variety of immigration benefits from individuals seeking to enter, reside, or work in the United States. Its business operations and associated budget varies from year to year depending upon the demand for its services. In FY 2006, USCIS expects to collect more than \$1.7 billion in fees.

### [USCIS Reminds Customers of Revised Fees to Appeal an AAO Decision, 9/28/05](#)

USCIS reminded its customers that a revised fee structure is now in place for all appeals and motions under the jurisdiction of USCIS' Administrative Appeals Office (AAO).

### [USCIS Announces Fee Adjustments, 9/26/05](#)

USCIS announced a revised fee structure for immigration benefits. The new fee structure becomes effective on October 26, 2005 and will add an average of \$10 to each application and petition in order to account for inflation.

## BY THE NUMBERS...

### BACKLOG ELIMINATION EFFORTS

This month's significant decrease in backlog can be attributed to several factors - all of which are the result of the continued diligence of USCIS Employees. Among their accomplishments is the fact that USCIS production (Case Completions) has significantly outpaced receipts for the last three months.

In addition, completions have also exceeded monthly backlog elimination production targets for the past six months. As a result, USCIS is reducing backlogged applications while simultaneously keeping current on non-backlogged form types.

Date	Number of Backlog Cases	Percent Change
April	1,093,114	- 3.5 %
May	1,053,902	+ 12 %
June	1,183,099	- 4.5 %
July	1,129,708	- 11%
August	997,644	

## “HOW DO I...?” FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS



# HOW DO I HELP MY RELATIVE BECOME A PERMANENT RESIDENT?

One of the most common ways people immigrate is based on a relationship to a permanent resident. If you are a permanent resident and you want to help a relative immigrate, go online to start the process by filing a [Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative](#).

Filing an I-130 relative petition and proving a qualifying relationship gives the relative a place in line for a visa number among others waiting to immigrate based on that same kind of relationship.

## WHO ARE THE RELATIVES I CAN PETITION FOR?

Any permanent resident can file a petition for the following relatives:

- Husband/wife; and
- Unmarried children, regardless of age.

In your petition, you will have to prove your relationship to the person for whom you are filing.

## HOW LONG WILL THIS PROCESS TAKE?

The length of the line—and thus, the wait before your relative can actually apply to immigrate—varies by relationship and country. For most relatives, the combination of high demand and the limits set by law on how many people can immigrate each year means that they may have to wait several years behind those with petitions that were filed before theirs. When your relative reaches the front of the line, the U.S. Department of State will contact him/her with instructions on how to apply for an immigrant visa. If you are interested in current wait times, see “[Visa Bulletins](#)” on the State Department’s website.

## WHAT ABOUT MY RELATIVE’S FAMILY?

In most cases, when your husband or wife’s place in line is reached and he/she applies to immigrate, his or her unmarried children under 21 can apply as dependents at that time. However, if the child marries or turns 21 before they immigrate, they will no longer be eligible as a dependent. USCIS recommends filing separate petitions for each child. A separate petition keeps the child’s place in line among sons and daughters of permanent residents waiting to immigrate.

If you think a child may marry before they can immigrate, you may want to not only consider filing a separate petition for them now, but also applying to become a U.S. citizen if you are eligible. While there is no visa category for the married child of a permanent resident, there is one for the married child of a U.S. citizen. Filing a separate petition now preserves that option so if you do become a U.S. citizen before the child marries, then the separate petition could continue to be processed in the visa category for the married son/daughter of a U.S. citizen.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I FILE?

After you file a relative petition, we will mail you a receipt so you will know we have received your petition. Please send all required papers the first time to avoid delay of your application. We will notify you when we make a decision and if your petition is approved, we will send it to the U.S. State Department’s National Visa Center (NVC). You can get further information about immigrant visa processing from the [U.S. State Department’s website](#).

The “How Do I...?” Section of USCIS Today contains answers to frequently asked questions from USCIS customers. The information provided in this section is available in English and Spanish on the [How Do I...? Section of the USCIS website](#).

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# REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROGRESS

## USCIS RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

### Background:

District Adjudications Officer Ursula Featherston is a native of Germany where she met and married her husband while he was serving in the U.S. Army. In 1968, Ursula immigrated to the United States with her husband and became a naturalized citizen in 1975. She received her first appointment to Civil Service in 1989, and worked for the Department of Defense while earning a B.A. from Park College at Fort Bliss, Texas. Ursula continued her career as a civil servant with the U.S. Border Patrol in 1995, and in 1996 she moved to Houston to join legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service as an Investigative Assistant. In 2000, Ursula was promoted to the position of District Adjudications Officer (DAO) and has been a member of the Naturalization unit since that time. Today, she is a valuable member of the exceptional team at the USCIS Houston District Office.



**Name:** Ursula Featherston  
**Position:** District Adjudications Officer  
**Location:** Houston District

### Describe what it is like to be a naturalized citizen working for USCIS:

It gives me great satisfaction to be able to help people who, like myself, want to become citizens of this great country. I can put applicants at ease, who are so very nervous to be interviewed by a government official, by just telling them that I know how it feels to sit on their side of the desk because I have been there too.

### Which of your contributions to USCIS are you most proud of?

Being able to correct some of the misconceptions held by certain members of the public regarding USCIS, has given me the most satisfaction. Many people are terrified of contacting USCIS. The image which has been portrayed of the Service, in part, is that some Immigration Officers are rude, not helpful, and unwilling to go the extra mile. In fact, most of the officers, which whom I work are extremely professional and knowledgeable and are helpful not only to the public but also to fellow employees.

### What's the most memorable moment you have experienced at USCIS?

There are many memorable moments. I was able to complete the adjudication for an applicant who had applied in 1996. The application had "fallen through the cracks". She had given up on ever realizing her dream of becoming a US citizen. Another memorable person was a Croatian applicant for naturalization. He had waited a long time to bring his bride to the US and get married. There are too many incidents to count. It gives me great satisfaction to be able to help so many people. Seeing those great, happy smiles, getting great big hugs, drying some happy tears, and getting kisses on my cheeks all give me a lot of happiness. I am able to look forward to the next day and do it all over again.

### How has USCIS changed since March 2003?

The greatest change I have seen is the increased emphasis on security. The long lines have disappeared, thanks in part to INFOPASS; the backlogs have diminished, this district is seeing applicants who have submitted their N-400s in April and May of this year, when just a few years ago it would take sometimes two and three years for the naturalization applications to be processed. I am very proud to be a part of this district and the work that we accomplish.

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## USCIS POSITION PROFILE

### DISTRICT ADJUDICATIONS OFFICER

Each year millions of people apply for various types of immigration benefits from the United States government. The benefits they seek include permission to import foreign workers, permission for relatives to immigrate and permission to become American citizens.

Adjudications Officers determine eligibility for this wide variety of benefits. They review applications and often conduct interviews of the applicants. Adjudications Officers have the dual responsibility of providing courteous service to the public while being alert to the possibility of fraud and illegal activity, and usually perform their duties in an office environment. District Adjudications Officers are located in USCIS offices nationwide.

### Would you like to work at USCIS?

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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT USCIS OCOMM 202.272.1200