



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS MONTHLY



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO T. GONZÁLEZ

The month of March gives USCIS an opportunity to take account of our accomplishments and recognize just how far we've come since transitioning from Legacy INS. In four short years since our establishment within the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS has made significant progress to enhance national security and make our national immigration service more efficient and customer friendly.

Over the past year, we celebrated the completion of our Backlog Elimination efforts, meeting the President's mandate and reducing the backlog from 3.8 million cases in January 2004 to less than 10,000 at the end of September 2006. We have also sharpened our focus on fraud detection and national security with the creation of the National Security and Records Verification Directorate. Behind the scenes, we are streamlining our processes, and moving from a paper-based system to an electronic platform with a user-friendly, online application system. In addition, we have already started to build an electronic database of e-files at our new Records Digitization Facility in Kentucky, and we are constantly expanding our capability to handle and process more electronic applications via our new and improved USCIS.gov web portal.

Recent accomplishments at USCIS will make our services more efficient and customer friendly. At the same time, we are continuing with organizational modernization to transform the way we do business, meet our mission goals, and make USCIS a better place to work. In this future immigration environment, it is important for USCIS to improve partnerships with other federal agencies and collaborate with immigrant advocates, businesses and community groups to challenge each other in our search for solutions to the pressing issues that we face.

That's why USCIS is proactively taking steps today to ensure that we'll have the personnel and procedures in place for the potential operational realities of tomorrow. As you may know, one of the ways we're preparing for the future is by updating our application fees to reflect the current costs of doing business. In addition to covering our basic day-to-day operations, the new fee structure will enable USCIS to improve the quality of the services we provide, giving applicants a more responsive, attentive and efficient immigration service for the 21st Century.

Specifically, the new fees will provide for infrastructure investments that will reduce processing times by 20 percent by the end of FY 2009; Address performance gaps identified by the Government Accountability Office, DHS Inspector General, and the USCIS Ombudsman; Upgrade facilities and provide better training to ensure a skilled workforce; Automate business operations, modernize our information technology infrastructure, reduce unacceptable paper-based processes and expand national security enhancements.

As a whole, the 200,000 men and women at the Department of Homeland Security are among the most dedicated and patriotic public servants. The agency itself has made huge strides in operational capacity since March 1, 2003, with the enactment of the Homeland Security Act. USCIS supports these efforts by continuing to maintain the integrity of our national immigration service. All together, we have much to be proud of on our fourth anniversary, and we have even more to look forward to in the years to come. I remain confident in our ability to adapt and evolve as necessary, remaining true to our mission and building an immigration service for the 21st century that is a model for the rest of the world and an agency in which every American can take pride. Here's to another successful year of progress at USCIS!

MARCH 2007

“USCIS 4th Anniversary Edition”

[A Message from USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez](#)

[Building an Immigration Service for the 21st Century](#)

[Community Relations Corner](#)

[Outstanding Americans by Choice](#)

[Adopted Valor: Immigrant Heroes](#)

[How Do I...? Frequently Asked Questions at USCIS](#)

[USCIS: Making a Difference in Our Communities](#)

[News You Can Use](#)

[Faces of America – New Citizens, Unique Stories](#)

USCIS: AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION SERVICE

FEE REVIEW RESOURCES CENTER



USCIS does not rely on taxpayer funding for its operations. Federal law and established regulatory policy have long called for the costs of providing immigration benefits to be borne by those applying for them. This means that more than 90% of the USCIS annual budget comes from the fees it collects from applicants.

Unlike most government agencies that rely primarily on Congressional appropriations, USCIS must fund its payroll expenses, bills and provide for future infrastructure investments through the collection of customer fees. Just like any modern-day international corporation, with more than 16,000 employees and 260 offices worldwide, our daily operating costs are considerable and USCIS must remain solvent every single day.

VIEW A [VIDEO MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR GONZALEZ](#) ON THE FEE REVIEW PROPOSAL



USCIS.gov offers a variety of information on the proposed Fee Review, including:

[Fact Sheet: Building an Immigration Service for the 21st Century](#) (41KB PDF)

[Fact Sheet: USCIS Fee Adjustments](#) (46KB PDF)

[A Message From USCIS Director Gonzalez: Transcript](#)

[Press Release: Building an Immigration Service for the 21st Century](#) (31KB PDF)

[Proposed Rule as Published in the Federal Register](#)

[Questions and Answers: Building an Immigration Service for the 21st Century](#) (69KB PDF)



HOW TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED FEE REVIEW:

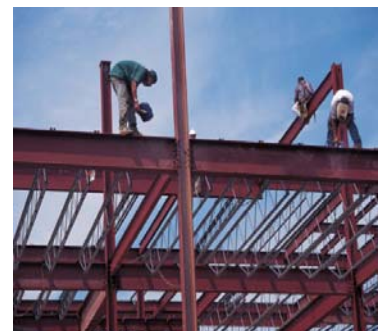
Federal eRulemaking portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>, follow the instructions for submitting comments.

By email: Send your comments to OSComments@dhs.gov, include the docket number (USCIS-2006-0044) in the subject line of the message.

By Facsimile: Federal eRulemaking Portal at 866-466-5370

By U.S. Mail: Director, Regulatory Management Division
USCIS/DHS
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20529

To ensure proper handling, please reference DHS Docket No. USCIS-2006-0044 on your correspondence. The mailing address may also be used for paper, disk or CD-ROM submissions.



USCIS: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY



COMMUNITY RELATIONS CORNER

FEE REVIEW OUTREACH: ADDRESSING CONCERNS AND ENCOURAGING PUBLIC COMMENT

With every new USCIS initiative, the agency's community relations program develops outreach plans to inform and establish dialogue with external stakeholders, advocates, customers and the public at large. This group of trained communicators works to ensure that USCIS programs and policies are understood by the impacted population, and that community concerns and input are conveyed back to our leadership.

When USCIS published a proposal to increase application fees in the Federal Register, the agency's Community Relations Program immediately kicked off a multi-faceted outreach strategy.

At the national level, USCIS headquarters hosted a roundtable discussion with national stakeholders featuring Director Emilio Gonzalez, Associate Director for Domestic Operations, Mike Aytes and Chief Financial Officer Rendell Jones.

At the local level, Community Relations Officers reached out to more than 1,900 external stakeholders and shared press materials and other information to explain the proposal. Community Relations Officers also held special face-to-face meetings to address questions raised by community-based organizations, and encourage people to comment on the proposal through the Federal Register process.

USCIS COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICERS:

Sally Blauvelt - Program Director
Shannon Wheeler, PMF

Western Region - Janna Evans
San Diego - John Ramirez
San Francisco - Rosemarie Fan
Laguna Niguel - Jorge Swank
Los Angeles - Rico Cabrera
Phoenix - Rudy Bustamante
Portland - Ed Sale

Central Region - Christine Pool
Denver - Barbara Melton
San Antonio - Jacque Crouse
Chicago - Val Obregon

Eastern Region - Ted Albers
Washington - Gloria Williams-Brevard
Philadelphia - Carol Hallstrom
Miami - Berta Cassidy
New York - Shyconia Burden-Noten
Detroit - Hiwatha Greene-Janvier



Rico Cabrera, Los Angeles Community Relations Officer, addresses the Naturalization Advisory Committee on the Fee Rule proposal

In San Antonio, Community Relations Officer Jacque Crouse and Regional Lead Christine Pool briefed more than 200 people on the proposed rule at a public meeting. Both the San Antonio meeting and a meeting held in Harlingen, Texas included San Antonio District Director Mario Ortiz.

In Fairfax, Virginia, Community Relations Officer Gloria Williams-Brevard held a stakeholder meeting on the Fee Rule with the support and leadership of Mariela Melero, Deputy Chief of the Office of Communications.

In New York City, Community Relations Officer Shyconia Burden-Noten hosted a CBO meeting attended by over 150 people. Jose Montero, Chief of the Office of Communications addressed the proposed fee rule to a crowd of over 200 people. District Director Andrea Quarantillo spent significant time with the audience discussing local NY issues.

Most recently, USCIS Associate Director Mike Aytes briefed community-based organizations in Los Angeles and Chicago on the rationale behind the proposed fee increase. In LA, more than 40 CBO representatives attended the session and the two-way exchange of questions and information lasted about an hour.

Overall, Community Relations Officers have helped inform thousands of stakeholders and customers in cities across the country about the proposed fee increase.

DON'T WAIT IN LINE, GO ONLINE AT WWW.USCIS.GOV

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, USCIS Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.



Miguel Orozco was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador. When he arrived to the United States, even though he could not speak a word of English and was not yet a citizen, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Mr. Orozco joined the U.S. Marine Corps because he felt that he should give back to his adopted country. He quickly learned English and as he likes to say, learned to love America in the Marines. Mr. Orozco lives by the Marine motto of *Semper Paratus*. Today, Mr. Orozco is an attorney and heads the International Affairs practice at the Law Firm of James Roche in Orange County, California.

He was recently appointed to the Hispanic 100 of Orange County, a prestigious professional organization of renowned private sector leaders. Most importantly, Mr. Orozco is a community leader. He works with the Lincoln-Juárez Opportunity Center of Santa Ana, which helps immigrants access vital services such as ESL classes, immigration services, employment, and health care. Mr. Orozco works with the center to provide his professional and life expertise to help immigrants integrate into American civic culture. He is married to Elizabeth Orozco and they have two children: Yesenia and Carlos.

Mexican-born director **Alejandro Gomez Monteverde** moved to the United States at the age of 17, to Austin, Texas to pursue his film career. Mr. Monteverde graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with an undergraduate degree in film. His first short film, *Bocho*, was followed by *Waiting for Trains*, which screened at many festivals, and *The Alchemy of Thieves*.



He has also directed several commercials and documentaries. *Bella* marks the feature directorial debut for Alejandro Monteverde, who also co-wrote its original screenplay. His first film, *Bella* took top prize at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival by winning the highly-coveted "Peoples Choice Award", a distinction which puts it in the company of such Oscar-winning films as *Chariots of Fire*, *American Beauty*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and *Hotel Rwanda*. Mr. Monteverde is married to actress and former miss USA, Ali Landry.



Dr. Ricardo Ernst was born in Venezuela on January 9, 1959. He is a professor at the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University. He holds a civil engineering degree from the Universidad Catolica Andres Bello and a master's in business administration from the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración, both in Venezuela. Dr. Ernst received a graduate degree and his doctorate in operations management from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. He is currently the co-director of the Global Logistics Research Program at Georgetown University School of Business.

Dr. Ernst has consulted with several national and international firms, including General Motors, CASE Corporation, Fairchild Industries, Fritz Companies and The World Bank. His contributions have appeared in several journals and his research interests include strategic analysis of logistics systems at both macro and micro levels. He is the co-author of a book on *Global Operations and Logistics* (John Wiley and Sons 1998) which includes an innovative framework as well as a series of cases from Europe, Asia, the U.S. and Latin America. Dr. Ernst is a member of INFORMS, Council of Logistics Management, POMS, and APICS, and is in the Editorial Review Board of *Production and Operations Management* and the *Journal of Global Information Management*.



ADOPTED VALOR: IMMIGRANT HEROES

FOREIGN BORN MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

SPECIALIST PETER LEMON - VIETNAM

Seven years after he became a naturalized American, Canadian-born Pete Lemon was serving in a U.S. Army Ranger platoon based in the jungles of Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam. The 19 year old Specialist was hoping to get a good night's rest on the night of April 1, 1970, when his Fire Support Base came under attack. Exhausted, scared, and fighting for his life, Lemon was bleeding from numerous shrapnel wounds in his head, back, and neck from an enemy mortar that exploded near his foxhole. Specialist Lemon was fortunate. That same mortar round had literally vaporized one of his close friends and fellow soldiers.

The battle raged for more than three hours at Fire Support Base Illingsworth, one of two small American outposts in the remote jungle region. Close to 400 enemy soldiers swarmed the small American position, and they had chosen the area of the perimeter defended by Pete's Platoon as their point of attack. Already the young soldier had successfully fought back two waves of enemy soldiers, survived the mortar attack, watched three friends die, and carried another wounded comrade to safety.

Pete Lemon furiously fought through two successive waves of enemy advances, determined that if he could survive THIS assault, the worst would be over. He was wounded a second time, when a third wave appeared poised to over run the perimeter. It seemed that all hope for survival was lost. "I said to myself, 'You're not going to make it through this one'," Pete later recalled. Determined to go down fighting, the intrepid soldier found a working machine gun and jumped to the top of the dirt wall embattlement and, in a fully exposed position, continued to fire at the enemy.

Wounded yet a third time in that final assault, and reduced to having to fend off the enemy in hand-to-hand combat, somehow the fearless Army Ranger survived the night and repelled the enemy attack. In the days that followed he replayed the vicious battle in his head and was haunted in dreams from his hospital bed. Every man in his platoon had been wounded. Dead were three of his closest friends, Casey Waller, Nathan Mann and Brent Street. His own wounds would require more than a month of hospitalization, yet he had refused to be evacuated until the other wounded had been flown to a field hospital. Peter Lemon's war was over, and within six months he had returned to his adopted hometown in Michigan as an American hero. He was later awarded the Medal of Honor by President Nixon in 1971.

Today, Pete Lemon is the proud father of three children, works as a professional speaker for corporations and associations, and volunteers his free time to schools, veterans groups and other organizations. He is the author of a book and the producer of a documentary film entitled, *Beyond the Medal: A Journey from Their Hearts to Yours*, which he dedicated to his fallen comrades.



Name: Peter Lemon
Rank: Specialist
Branch: U.S. Army
Nation of Birth: Canada



VISIT [USCIS.GOV](http://uscis.gov) TODAY!

USCIS has replaced its old website with a new, more effective, redesigned 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](#). Don't wait in line...Go online!



“HOW DO I...?”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS

HOW DO I... USE THE EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION / BASIC PILOT PROGRAM?

The Employment Eligibility Verification Program (EEV) is an Internet-based system operated by USCIS and the Social Security Administration (SSA). The EEV is currently free to employers and is available in all 50 states. The EEV provides an automated link to federal databases to help employers determine employment eligibility of new hires and the validity of their Social Security numbers. As of December 2006, over 12,000 employers representing over 45,000 sites are participating in the EEV program.

Why should I consider participating in the program?

EEV is currently the best means available for employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of their newly hired employees. The EEV virtually eliminates Social Security mismatch letters, improves the accuracy of wage and tax reporting, protects jobs for authorized U.S. workers, and helps U.S. employers maintain a legal workforce.

How do I register for participation in the EEV?

You can register [online](#) for the program. At the end of the registration process, you will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides the terms of agreement between you the employer, the SSA and DHS. An employee who has signatory authority for the employer can sign the MOU. Employers can use their discretion in identifying the best method by which to sign up their locations for EEV. For example, an employer may choose to designate one site to perform the verification queries for newly hired employees on behalf of the entire company. Only one MOU would need to be signed for this option. An employer may also choose to have each site perform their own verification queries. This option requires each site performing verification queries to register and to submit an MOU to participate in the program.

Our company has several hiring sites interested in participating in EEV. How should these sites register?

Each site that will perform the employment verification queries must go through the registration process and sign an individual MOU.

I am an employer with multiple hiring sites. Can one site verify everyone? How?

Yes, one site may verify new hires at all sites. When registering, the individual at the site that will be verifying new hires should select “multiple site registration” and give the number of sites per states it will be verifying.

What is a Third Party Agent for the EEV Program?

An EEV Third Party Agent is a liaison between the EEV Program and employers wishing to participate, but who choose to outsource submission of employment eligibility verification queries for newly hired employees. The EEV Third Party Agents conduct the verification process for other employers/clients. An EEV Third Party Agent must register on-line and sign an MOU with SSA and DHS.

How does the program work?

Using an automated system, the program involves verification checks of SSA and DHS databases. The EEV MOU, User Manual and Tutorial contain instructions and other related materials on EEV procedures and requirements. Once the user has completed the tutorial, he or she may begin using the system to verify the employment eligibility of all newly hired employees.

Can I verify the immigration status of new hires?

No. The EEV verifies a new hire's employment eligibility, not his or her immigration status.

What information is required from new hires?

After hiring a new employee and completing the Form I-9 required for all new hires (regardless of EEV participation), one must submit a query that includes information from sections 1 and 2 of the Form I-9, including the employee's name, date of birth, Social Security account number (SSN), the citizenship status he or she attests to, an A# or I-94# (if applicable), the type of document provided on the Form I-9 to establish work authorization status and proof of identity, and its expiration date (if applicable). Response to the initial query is sent within seconds of submitting the query. Documents presented for Form I-9 identification only purposes (documents from “List B”) to EEV employers must have a photograph.

Does participation in the Program provide safe harbor from worksite enforcement?

An employer who verifies work authorization under the EEV Program has established a rebuttable presumption that it has not knowingly hired an unauthorized alien. However, participation in the program does not provide a “safe harbor” from worksite enforcement.

To find out more about the EEV Program, contact USCIS at 1-888-464-4218.

USCIS: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

A SPECIAL NATURALIZATION CEREMONY

AT THE USCIS BOISE OFFICE

The USCIS Boise Office has a tradition of getting the new citizens involved in their ceremonies. When Fabiana Huffaker, a native of Argentina, naturalized at a ceremony on February 27, 2007, she made the event a real family affair.

Huffaker's two sons are members of a Boy Scout troupe. She brought five of the Scouts to post the colors, and her son Jacob, 12, led the Pledge of Allegiance. Daughter Rachel, 16, sang the National Anthem. Then, Acting Field Office Director, Bruce Darling called on Fabiana to share her feelings in an impromptu speech.

"We came here in 1974, and it took me forever to work up the courage to do this," she said. A bad experience at an INS office, years before, made her dread filing for citizenship. "But when I went in for fingerprints, I just couldn't have found nicer people! They were professional and courteous, and made helpful suggestions."

After the ceremony, the Huffaker family cut two cakes and passed cookies around to help the other new citizens, 47 in all, celebrate their special day.



Jacob Huffaker leads the Pledge of Allegiance at his mother Fabiana's naturalization ceremony in Boise (below)



WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

Visit USAJOBS Online for more information on openings and opportunities at USCIS and other federal agencies.

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

NEWS YOU CAN USE... FROM USCIS COMMUNICATIONS

[Suspected Murderer, Convicted Rapist and Narcotics Violator Arrested in Florida](#) - 03/01/2007

[Fact Sheet: Freedom of Information Act](#) - 02/28/2007

[Update: New Biometrics Process for Conditional Permanent Residents](#) - 02/28/2007

[USCIS Launches New Track for Processing Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) Requests](#) - 02/28/2007

[Fact Sheet: Guatemalan Asylum Applicants in the Context of the ABC Settlement Agreement and Section 203 of the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act \(NACARA\)](#) - 02/28/2007

[USCIS Advises Petitioners Overseas - Do Not Re-File I-130](#) - 02/27/2007

[Update: USCIS Unveils Revised Application for Employment Authorization \(Form I-765\)](#) - 02/21/2007

[Update: USCIS Clarifies Criteria to Expedite FBI Name Check](#) - 02/20/2007

[Public Notice: USCIS to Reissue Requests for Evidence for Special Immigrant Religious Workers \(Form I-360\)](#) -02/16/2007

[USCIS Reveals A New Look for Travel Booklets](#) - 02/15/2007



USCIS: ENHANCING EFFICIENCY



FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS, UNIQUE STORIES

EMMANUEL IRONO – NIGERIA

Emmanuel O. Irono came to the United States as a foreign exchange student and planned to return to Nigeria after college to work for his father's construction company. But when both of his parents died within two years, he decided against returning and began paying his tuition by working as a school janitor.

After graduating, Mr. Irono took a job working as a budget analyst for a federal contractor. However, he wanted to start his own firm, and he bought out a small struggling janitorial service company's supplies for \$10,000 and turned it into a \$14 million profit generator. He renamed the company Motir, in honor of his parents - Memory of Theresa Irono Romonus (MOTIR).

With an exceptional track record in senior level management and administration, Mr. Irono has grown Motir Inc. from one division of custodial services to a full scale management consulting company with divisions for Construction and Environmental Services, Facilities Management and Medical Staffing.

Never forgetting his roots as an immigrant, the Nigerian born Irono has traveled all over the world and has created a company of diversity that continues to give back to his homeland through his non profit organization TIS (To Inspire Strong) African Children Fund. TIS feeds, educates and provides medical treatment for the children of Africa. Whether feeding the hungry and abandoned, supplying educational tools for rural area school children, or implementing an AIDS Awareness Program, Mr. Irono is taking local action and reaching global heights.

As Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Irono has served on the Board of Directors of major organizations, while continuing to direct all aspects of Motir's operational policies, objectives, and initiatives responsible for the attainment of both short and long term goals.

Mr. Irono has established a foundation of strong linkages to benefit other small companies, not only at the local level, but throughout the United States. He has been a counselor, teacher and educator. He is a strong businessman within the community he serves and has won "Small Business of the Year" and "Outstanding Mentor of the Year" awards.

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

ON ANY GIVEN DAY AT USCIS...

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

- Conduct **135,000** national security background checks
- Receive **135,000** visitors to our Internet site (www.USCIS.gov)
- Process **30,000** applications for immigrant benefits

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.

USCIS AND DHS: SECURING OUR HOMELAND