



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS TODAY



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO T. GONZÁLEZ

Since our establishment within the Department of Homeland Security just three years ago, USCIS has made significant progress to enhance national security and maintain the integrity of our national immigration system. At the same time, we are making organizational improvements to transform the way we do business and streamline outdated processes to make us a leaner, faster and stronger agency. All together, we have much to celebrate on our third anniversary, and we have much to be proud of.

A challenging future lies ahead of us, and the stakes are high as Congress prepares to decide upon a Temporary Worker Program and we approach our Backlog Elimination deadlines. The beginning of our third year gives us the opportunity to build a new framework for achievement at USCIS, focused on three core competencies: **National Security, Customer Satisfaction, and Organizational Excellence.**

MARCH 2006

USCIS 3rd Anniversary Edition

[Message From USCIS Director Emilio T. González](#)

[USCIS FY2007 Budget Request](#)

[USCIS Business Transformation Update](#)

[Reminder: H-1B Filing Period Begins April 1, 2006](#)

[USCIS Naturalizes Citizen Soldiers](#)

[News You Can Use](#)

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

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

[Real People, Real Progress – Employee Spotlight](#)

USCIS RECOGNIZES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF 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 their country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans.

In February 2006, USCIS Director Emilio T. González recognized U.S. Senator Mel Martinez and Anne O’Callaghan as the first recipients of the *Outstanding American by Choice* certificate. A naturalized citizen from Cuba, Senator Martinez has served his community and country at various levels of government service, and Ms. O’Callaghan, a native of Ireland, founded an organization to identify and create employment opportunities for legal immigrants in the Philadelphia area.

Throughout the year, Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their community and their adopted country.



USCIS Director Emilio González presents certificates to Anne O’Callaghan of Philadelphia and U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.



“SECURING AMERICA’S PROMISE”

USCIS FISCAL YEAR 2007 BUDGET REQUEST

SEEKS FUNDS FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION, SAVE/EEV PROGRAMS

USCIS is one of the largest fee-funded agencies in the Federal government. A majority of USCIS' annual operating expenses are covered by the receipt of application fees paid by persons seeking immigration benefits. The USCIS Fiscal Year 2007 budget reflects a \$1.8 billion in expected fee-revenue and an additional request for \$182 million in discretionary funding from Congress for a total budget of \$1.98 billion.

The discretionary funding request includes funds to transform business operations and to expand the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program and the Employment Eligibility Verification (EEV) Program in anticipation of a mandatory employment verification requirement. A total of \$134 million is requested to expand the SAVE and EEV programs to meet the new requirements of the REAL ID Act and in anticipation of a mandatory electronic employment verification requirement.

The SAVE program is an intergovernmental, information-sharing initiative designed to aid Federal, state and local benefit providers in verifying immigration status, thereby ensuring that only entitled individuals receive public benefits. The EEV program enables employers to confirm the employment eligibility of employees, improves the accuracy of wage and tax reporting, and protects jobs for authorized workers through an internet-based application. Both are key components of the Administration's Secure Border Initiative.

An additional \$47 million is being sought to modernize USCIS business operations as part of a comprehensive, multi-year program to dramatically improve how USCIS interacts with customers; how it receives, processes and exchanges information; and how it ensures the security and integrity of the immigration system. This funding will help USCIS accelerate critically needed modernization that would proceed too slowly if annual processing fees were relied upon to fully finance this program. An estimated \$65 million in fee revenues will supplement the program's discretionary resources. The USCIS Business Transformation Program is a key element of Secretary Chertoff's Second Stage Review.

USCIS BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

“DELIVERING IMMIGRATION SERVICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY”



What is the current status of the transformation efforts at USCIS?

Some of the principles of business change that have been established thus far include, but are not limited to:

- Account based management for customer types, including individuals, employers, and attorneys
- Distributed workload management for adjudications
- Automated case management which consolidates customer information in user-friendly formats for the adjudicator to process cases
- More transparency for customers seeking case status information
- Workload management reporting and tracking for various customer groups
- Increased ability to determine fraud patterns and vulnerabilities that will be available with centralized data in electronic formats
- Greater information sharing among agencies with whom USCIS partners within DHS and throughout government

How much is the USCIS transformation going to cost?

Current expectations include costs of \$75 million in FY 2006, and \$112 million in FY 2007. USCIS will be exploring fee increases to cover its cost of operations, including investments in operations improvements.

REMINDER: H-1B FILINGS FOR FY 2007 BEGIN APRIL 1, 2006

USCIS reminds all eligible employers and workers that April 1, 2006 is the first day that an employer may file H-1B petitions subject to the FY 2007 cap, with an H-1B employment start date of October 1, 2006. Petitions will be accepted by USCIS in the order they are received.

In FY 2006 the Congressionally mandated cap for H-1B petitions was reached on August 10, 2005, so it is important for employers to submit their paperwork for H-1B petitions as early as possible after the filing window opens on April 1, 2006. USCIS reminds employers to review employment needs and paperwork requirements before submitting petitions to USCIS.

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

USCIS.gov features an evolving suite of internet based services that decrease waiting times for customers. The [INFOPASS](#) Online appointment system, our 24-hour [National Customer Service Call Center](#), the ability to file and check the status of applications online using our [E-Filing Online Application Center](#), and other electronic media have improved our ability to both tackle the existing backlog of cases, while handling an increasing number of applicants.

USCIS NATURALIZES NEW CITIZEN SOLDIERS



Ten members of the 250th Transportation Company, Army Reserve Unit from El Monte, California were naturalized in a special administrative naturalization ceremony on March 6th at the El Paso CIS District Office by District Director Raymond P. Adams. This reserve unit arrived at Ft. Bliss, Texas in January for training before deploying to Iraq on March 14, 2006.

Knowing that they would soon depart for Iraq, The El Paso District Office expedited their naturalization applications in coordination with the Nebraska Service Center. Fingerprinting and interviews were coordinated with the unit and Ft. Bliss to minimize the loss of any training time at the base. Since Operation Iraqi Freedom was launched in March 2003, Adams' office has naturalized about 1,000 soldiers in special ceremonies.

There are approximately 40,000 immigrant military service members serving around the world. Since September 11, 2001, USCIS has naturalized 24,745 military service members. During FY2005, USCIS naturalized 8,504 military service members, 7,498 of these service members were naturalized stateside and 1,006 immigrants were naturalized overseas. USCIS is currently processing an additional 3,472 military naturalization applications for FY2006.

Under an Executive Order signed by President Bush in July 2002, legal permanent residents actively serving in the U.S. military, and legal permanent residents who were on active duty on September 11, 2001 or after, and honorably discharged, are immediately eligible to apply for naturalization. The President is authorized to waive the normal residency requirements for naturalization during specified periods of military hostilities. The July 2002 Executive Order designates the current period of activity in Iraq and Afghanistan as such. More than 13,000 military personnel have applied for expedited citizenship since the Executive Order was enacted.

Visit USCIS.gov for more information on USCIS' [Military Naturalization Program](#) and to learn more about the services we provide to our men and women in uniform and their families.

USCIS: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

ARE YOU ONE OF THE
"FACES OF AMERICA?"

[SUBMIT YOUR STORY](#)

FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS... UNIQUE STORIES

OZZIE GUILLEN - VENEZUELA



Ozzie Guillen shows off his Certificate of Naturalization with US District Court Judge Marvin Aspen.

(Photo: © Ron Vesely/Chicago White Sox)

Venezuelan native, Ozzie Guillen, has had much to celebrate over the past year. Three months ago, the manager of the Chicago White Sox led his team to a World Series victory. In January, Ozzie celebrated his 42nd birthday by becoming a U.S. citizen.

Guillen, who took the oath with his wife, Ibis, and son Oney, said becoming an American was a bigger thrill than winning the World Series. "You can only become a U.S. citizen once," he said, adding, "The funny thing about this is when I won the World Series, a lot of people felt that was my dream. That was my goal, to win the World Series... To do this is something real special."

Born in Ocumare del Tuy, Venezuela, Ozzie came to the U.S. when he was sixteen to play professional baseball. Known as much for his skill as his outspoken nature, Guillen was a three-time All-Star shortstop who spent most of his career with the White Sox.

Guillen called gaining U.S. citizenship "a dream come true" and said, "Do you know how many people die every week just to live in this country? Hundreds. That's a dream. A lot of people want to be Americans. It's not an easy thing to do."

When he's not on the field, Ozzie and his family split time between homes in Miami and Caracas, Venezuela. Guillen mentioned that being a U.S. citizen and carrying a U.S. passport will make international travel easier. But he also called the United States "a great country" that "gives you the chance to be what you want to be."

CASE STATUS ONLINE

If you have filed an application with USCIS, you can check your case status [online](#) using your case receipt number.

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

[DHS Announces Temporary Protected Status Extension for El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua](#)

In a continuing effort to assist El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua in recovering from the natural disasters that affected the Central American region, the Department of Homeland Security has announced a decision to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for an additional 12 months for all three countries.

Under this extension, nationals of El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua who have already been granted and remain eligible for TPS will be able to continue living and working in the United States for an additional 12 months. This extension covers approximately 225,000 Salvadorans, 75,000 Hondurans, and 4,000 Nicaraguans. This extension of these TPS designations will expire on September 9, 2007 for El Salvador and on July 5, 2007 for Honduras and Nicaragua.



USCIS: PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

“HOW DO I...?”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS



HOW DO I...APPLY FOR U.S. CITIZENSHIP?

United States (U.S.) citizenship carries many responsibilities with it. The decision to become a U.S. citizen is a very important one. Being granted U.S. citizenship is known as naturalization. In most cases, a person who wants to naturalize must first be a permanent resident. By becoming a U.S. citizen, you gain many rights that permanent residents or others do not have, including the right to vote. To be eligible for naturalization, you must first meet certain requirements set by U.S. law.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS TO APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION?

Generally, to be eligible for naturalization you must:

- Be age 18 or older; and
- Be a permanent resident for a certain amount of time (usually 5 years); and
- Be a person of good moral character; and
- Have a basic knowledge of U.S. history, government; and
- Have a period of continuous residence and physical presence in the U.S.; and
- Be able to read, write and speak basic English (With specific exceptions for age and disability).

WHEN CAN I APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION?

You may be able to apply for naturalization if you are at least 18 years of age and have been a permanent resident of the U.S.:

- For at least 5 years; or
- For at least 3 years during which time you have been, and continue to be, married to and living in marriage with your U.S. citizen husband or wife; or
- Have honorable service in the U.S. military.

Certain spouses of U.S. citizens and members of the military may be able to file for naturalization sooner.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR NATURALIZATION?

To apply for naturalization, file the *Application for Naturalization*, Form N-400. This form is available online, [CLICK HERE](#).

To learn more about Naturalization procedures for Military Personnel [CLICK HERE](#).

For more detailed information on the naturalization process, including a list of 26 frequently asked questions and information on Citizenship qualifications, please see our online manual, [A Guide to Naturalization](#), available online in English, Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese and Vietnamese.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Send your application, two photos, documents, and fee to the appropriate [Service Center](#). USCIS will then contact you to begin the formal naturalization process.

This process requires potential new citizens to submit fingerprints and visit a local USCIS office for an interview with an Adjudications Officer. Later, you will also be asked to take the English and U.S. Civics tests. For help preparing, USCIS has created a series of question and answer civics flash cards. These cards are available online, [CLICK HERE](#).

Upon successful completion of these requirements, you will receive a formal decision and a Naturalization Ceremony date, where you will take the Oath of Allegiance and return your Permanent Residency Card.

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

REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROGRESS

USCIS RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Imagine the joy of being a young mother, then think of how having cancer in your leg would change those feelings. That's what happened to Annabel Burch, an Immigration Information Officer (IIO) in the Seattle District Yakima office. Young and strong, she endured several surgeries and considered herself a survivor.

Annabel thought she was home free until 2004 when, pregnant with her third child, she found that the cancer had returned, and that she needed chemotherapy. Despite the pregnancy, she started chemo, and once the baby was delivered, had an above-the-knee amputation of her leg. After recovery, she was fitted with a prosthetic and learned how to walk again. She remained optimistic that she would be able to walk before the new baby could. She had survived the disease for a second time.

Then last March, a grape sized cancerous growth was found and removed from her lung. Annabel is now a three-time cancer survivor. "Of course, I've had my moments, but I don't let it get to me," she said. "That doesn't do you any good." The American Cancer Society was impressed with her courage, and invited her to be the honorary chairwoman of the 2005 Relay for Life. USCIS is proud to share Annabel's story in this edition of Real People, Real Progress.



Name: Annabel Burch
Position: Immigration Information Officer
Location: Yakima, WA Office

Immigration Information Officers provide a variety of customer services, including certain case services and problem resolution assistance on applications and petitions. These positions are located throughout the country in District offices, Sub offices, and Service Centers.

Please tell us about yourself and how you came to work at USCIS:

I started as a student aide, while attending a community college here. Eventually, Yakima's IIO was promoted to adjudications officer, so the supervisor asked if I was interested in the new position. I started at USCIS in 1993, and have been an IIO since '95. In an office with just 10 employees, counting the Officer-in-Charge, there are just two IIO's.

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

The most important thing to me is customer service. I'm big on helping the applicant understand how a process needs to be done. A lot of our customers don't understand how the system works. When you're able to help them understand, it makes you feel good about yourself. People would come in frustrated, I'd help them, get them straightened out, and they'd leave at ease.

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

Being the honorary chair for the Relay for Life, the build-up, the potluck luncheons. Also, when I was sick, I received so much help from my co-workers at USCIS and friends at ICE. You don't realize how much support you get from employees until you go through what I went through. Leave donations meant my family didn't have to go without my paycheck. I'm well now. It was just a bump in the road. You get over it, and on the way you go. My husband's my 'shoulder to lean on.' We have three kids, and the youngest is just 17 months. He had to pick up the slack.

How has USCIS changed since March 2003?

We're more independent now. Since the split, it seems our new agency is doing more for both the applicants and the employees. The majority of our clientele, here in Yakima, depends on someone else to help them file. Sometimes they have no idea what they're filing. Now, with all the positive changes, there's more time to help them understand what they're doing. I explain, and they feel more comfortable in knowing.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT USCIS OCOMM 202.272.1200