



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# USCIS TODAY

## PRESIDENT BUSH ATTENDS USCIS NATURALIZATION CEREMONY



(Seated Left to Right) USCIS Chief of Citizenship Alfonso Aguilar and USCIS Director Emilio T. González

APRIL 2006

**“Celebrate Citizenship, Celebrate America”**

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America’s newest citizens were treated to once-in-a-lifetime experience as President Bush welcomed them as Americans and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales led them in the Pledge of Allegiance during a naturalization ceremony presided over by USCIS Director Emilio T. González at the Daughters of the American Revolution building in Washington, D.C. on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

“Our immigrant heritage has enriched America’s history. It continues to shape our society. Each generation of immigrants brings a renewal to our national character and adds vitality to our culture,” remarked President Bush who then spoke about the work underway by DHS to implement his three-part approach to immigration reform.

“I’ve laid out a proposal for comprehensive immigration reform that includes three critical elements: securing the border, strengthening the immigration enforcement inside our country, and creating a temporary worker program. These elements depend on and reinforce one another, and together they will give America an immigration system that meets the needs of the 21st century,” the President said. “America should not have to choose between being a welcoming society and being a lawful society. We can be both at the same time.”

At the ceremony, 30 people from 20 countries took the Oath of Allegiance to become the newest U.S. citizens. In his congratulatory remarks, USCIS Director González said, “... with your naturalization, you strengthen the cause of freedom, invigorate our democratic institutions, and are living proof of the value of immigration to this great land.”

To highlight the importance of citizenship, USCIS special naturalization ceremonies are held at prominent national and historic landmarks nationwide, in addition to those held regularly at U.S. District Courts throughout the country.

During fiscal year 2005, more than 600,300 immigrants were sworn-in as U.S. citizens by USCIS.

The full text of the president’s speech is available on the [White House Web site](#).  
A news release on the event is also available at the [USCIS Web site](#).

**“SECURING AMERICA’S PROMISE”**



# HOW WILL IMMIGRATION REFORM LEGISLATION AFFECT USCIS?

## *NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS*



At print deadline, all eyes are on the Senate as they continue to debate immigration reform. On March 27, the Senate Judiciary Committee completed its consideration of the “Chairman’s mark”, a bill that drew upon several of the Senate-sponsored immigration bills introduced by Senators Cornyn, Kyl, McCain and Kennedy.

The bill that was the result of several long days of mark-up consisted of both enforcement and benefits measures, including a temporary worker program. At this time, the Senate has embarked on floor debate of immigration reform, beginning with the enforcement-focused bill introduced by Senate Majority Leader Frist. As the debate progresses, many amendments are anticipated, including the possibility of substituting the “chairman’s mark” for Senator Frist’s bill.

USCIS has been working with the Department of Homeland Security and the White House to support requests for information, views and statistics to inform the debate. While Congress debates these bills, USCIS has been busy preparing for the potential operational realities of a temporary worker program and expanded employment verification system responsibilities. Stay tuned for further developments on this historic legislative debate.



**The Office of Congressional Relations (OCR)** is the primary liaison between USCIS and members of Congress and congressional staffers regarding legislation and congressional casework. OCR is the lead advisor to the Director and Senior Staff on all legislative matters, congressional hearings and briefings.

## DIRECTOR GONZÁLEZ VISITS VERMONT SERVICE CENTER



USCIS Director González dropped by the Vermont Service Center in Burlington to meet with employees and take a tour of the Center’s modern facilities. “The Vermont Service Center is a shining example of USCIS professionalism,” Director González remarked. “I plan to visit many of our field offices in the upcoming months – some of these visits I may announce, some of them I won’t. Because when I show up at your offices, I don’t just want to see the good. I want to see the bad and the ugly, too, so that we know what works and what needs fixing.”

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## 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.

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## USCIS...A DAY IN THE LIFE

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

- Conduct **135,000** national security background checks
- Answer phone inquiries from **82,000** calls to our toll-free customer service phone line
- Process **30,000** applications for immigrant benefits

[CLICK HERE](#) for more statistics on what we do to securely and efficiently administer our nation's immigration system.

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## OUTSTANDING AMERICAN BY CHOICE CONGRESSMAN TOM LANTOS (D-CA)

Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA), was presented with USCIS' "*Outstanding American by Choice*" certificate, at a special ceremony in the Congressman's Capitol Hill office. This new USCIS initiative highlights the significant contributions of naturalized United States citizens and demonstrates the positive impact of immigration by recognizing naturalized citizens who are making a special difference in their communities.

Congressman Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor serving in Congress, became a U.S. citizen in 1952 and was elected to the Congress for California's 12<sup>th</sup> District in 1980. Currently serving his 13<sup>th</sup> term, Mr. Lantos continues to work on a variety of issues affecting his constituency in the San Francisco Bay Area communities, including his lifelong passion for promoting human rights around the world.

"My life today, given my background, is something I cannot believe possible. I am privileged to serve the Congress of the United States," remarked Congressman Lantos. "I think back to my life fifty years ago, when I was a hunted animal in the jungle, and how I am dealing with issues of state of a country I love so deeply. It all seems like a dream and it all places an incredible sense of responsibility on me. I didn't achieve this because of what I am, it happened because of what this country is."



Director González and Rep. Lantos

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

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## USCIS: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

# FACES OF AMERICA

## NEW CITIZENS... UNIQUE STORIES

### SERGIO VILLA - MEXICO



Sergio Villa signs his Certificate and takes the Oath of Allegiance



Sergio Villa, a native of Mexico, is currently on the national liver transplant waiting list, and is confined to a hospital bed. Villa, a father of two, was scheduled to participate in a naturalization ceremony with hundreds of individuals who had passed both the test and all the necessary security checks before he fell ill.

Unable to make it to scheduled meetings with USCIS to finalize his naturalization application, officials from the USCIS Dallas District Office came to him for a special Citizenship Ceremony at his bedside.

Laying in his hospital bed looking very fragile and in a soft voice he recited the Oath of Allegiance in the presence of his wife, two children and his relatives, and became an American citizen. With a slight grin Villa said, "Now I am just like them," referring to his American born family.

Villa explained that he only had three wishes in life, and becoming an American was the first. His other two include receiving a liver transplant and meeting the donor's family.

In cases of physical hardship or medical emergency, USCIS Officials strive to provide timely services to those who are unable to travel or have medical conditions that prevent them from attending formal meetings and ceremonies.

ARE YOU ONE OF THE  
"FACES OF AMERICA?"

[SUBMIT YOUR STORY](#)

## NEWS YOU CAN USE...

### FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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

DHS and USCIS announced the publication of Notices in the Federal Register designating a 12-month extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for nationals of Honduras and Nicaragua until July 5, 2007. The [How Do I...? Section](#) of USCIS Today contains additional TPS information.

#### [USCIS Issues H-1B Guidance, 3/24/06](#)

USCIS will begin accepting filings for the FY2007 H-1B cap on April 1, 2006. In anticipation of this event, USCIS is reminding the public of important regulatory requirements. H-1B petitioners should keep this emphasis in mind as they prepare petitions in order to avoid delays in processing.

#### [USCIS Notifies Employers of Filing Changes, 3/24/06](#)

USCIS announced changes to the filing procedure for two popular employer-sponsored immigration forms. Starting on April 1, employers filing a Petition for a Non-immigrant Worker (Form I-129) should mail that form directly to the Vermont Service Center. Also starting on April 1, employers filing an Immigrant Petition for an Alien Worker (Form I-140) should mail that form directly to the Nebraska Service Center. For more information see the online [Filing Changes Fact Sheet](#).

#### [USCIS Issues Sample H-2B Attestation, 3/16/06](#)

USCIS has issued a [Sample H-2B Returning Worker Attestation](#) for employers to follow when filing petitions including returning H-2B workers.



**USCIS: PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

# “How Do I...?”

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS



# HOW DO I...REGISTER FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS)?

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is granted to eligible nationals of designated countries suffering the effects of an ongoing-armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. DHS and USCIS have announced the publication of Notices in the Federal Register designating 12-month extensions of TPS for nationals of Honduras and Nicaragua until July 5, 2007. DHS has also automatically extended the validity of EADs for eligible Hondurans and Nicaraguans for 6 months until January 5, 2007.

### How do I re-register for a TPS extension?

If you already have been granted TPS for Honduras or Nicaragua, your TPS will expire on July 5, 2006. You may re-register during the 60-day re-registration period beginning on April 1, 2006 and ending June 1, 2007. Unlike previous registration procedures, TPS re-registrants need not submit photographs with the TPS application because photographs will be taken, if needed, when the applicant appears at an Application Support Center (ASC) for collection of biometrics. To re-register, submit the following:

- Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status
- Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization
- A biometric services fee of seventy dollars (\$70) if you are 14 years of age or older, or if you are under 14 and requesting an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) extension. The biometric services fee will not be waived.
- A photocopy of the front and back of your EAD if your received an EAD during the most recent registration period.

### Where should I submit my application for TPS?

USCIS has designated two post office (P.O.) boxes with the Chicago Lockbox for the filing of TPS applications under this extension in order to facilitate efficient processing. Please note that applications should only be filed at the appropriate P.O. Box and should not be filed with a USCIS Service Center or District Office. Failure to submit a TPS application to the correct P.O. Box may result in a delay of adjudication.

Please see the [Nicaragua](#) and [Honduras TPS Factsheets](#) for exact addresses and important fee payment notices.

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

### Where can I obtain forms and more information?

Information concerning TPS is available at the [USCIS web site](#) or the USCIS National Customer Service Center, at 1-800-375-5283. Applicants may obtain forms from the USCIS web site or by contacting the USCIS Forms Line, 1-800-870-3676.

### If I entered the United States after December 30, 1998, would I qualify for benefits under TPS?

No. This extension does not change the required dates of continuous residence and continuous physical presence in the United States. To be eligible, nationals of Honduras and Nicaragua (or a person who last habitually resided in such designated state) must have continuously resided in the United States since December 30, 1998 and been continuously physically present in the United States since January 5, 1999.

### May I apply for another immigration benefit while registered for TPS?

Yes. Registration for TPS does not prevent you from applying for another non-immigrant status, from filing for adjustment of status based on an immigrant petition, or from applying for any other immigration benefit or protection. For the purposes of change of status and adjustment of status, an alien is considered as being in, and maintaining, lawful status as a nonimmigrant during the period in which the alien is granted TPS.

### Are TPS beneficiaries permitted to travel?

Those granted TPS must receive advance permission to return to the United States if traveling abroad. This advance permission is called Advance Parole and can be obtained by filing Form I-131 Application for a Travel Document, with the USCIS Service Center in your jurisdiction.

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# REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROGRESS

## USCIS RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Tell Jenny Rodriguez, a district adjudications officer (DAO) in USCIS Fresno office, that you're surprised to learn that she was a farm worker from age six, and she'll say, "That's really nothing unusual here in Fresno. Lots of people can say the same." What's amazing is that the child, who traveled from state to state with her family, picking crops, completing an entire year of school just once, is now a hard-working DAO.

Rodriguez left the farm-worker life when she married at 17, then got career-minded as a divorcee. She earned her college degree in Sociology as a single mother of three, working part-time and living on scholarships, student loans and grants. Back in the '80s, Rodriguez left her first post-graduate job with the state's unemployment office to work for INS, adjudicating claims for amnesty, mostly made by farm workers. The job lasted four years. "I wasn't thinking of a 'career,'" she says. "It's important to do what you love to do, even if it means going to find something else."

That philosophy brought her to the University of California at Davis' Cooperative Extension Service, working on safety and health programs that affect farmers and farm workers. From there, she became an investigator for the U.S. Department of Labor, making sure growers and labor contractors paid fairly. Today, she makes decisions that affect people just like those who shared her childhood labors.

But as well as she does that, it's not her best talent. When there's something the Spanish-speaking community needs to know – and she can be spared from her DAO duties – Jenny swings into action as a part-time Community Liaison Officer. Her background as a farm worker makes her the perfect emissary – someone who can speak for USCIS in terms that don't intimidate or confuse people working in the fields.

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

My Spanish skills and my people skills. This is where I can make a contribution to society. I've always told my daughters, you have to make a difference, be a Change-Agent. One of the things I'm most proud of is the trust and credibility that I bring back to USCIS from the community. That's because our local office outreach rocks, always has!

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

On my first job for INS, I used to do a weekly live appearance on Fresno's Univision TV station. Then I went to work for U.C. Davis. For my last appearance, I was going to do the interview then say good-bye. All of a sudden, the host pulled out a plaque and gave it to me. I just lost it. I started crying, he started crying, everyone on the set was laughing and crying at the same time.

### 3) How has USCIS changed since March 2003?

To improve security, we are handling more background checks, which make our work take a little longer. And we don't have the direct connection we used to have with ICE.



**Name:** Jenny Rodriguez  
**Position:** District Adjudications Officer  
**Location:** Fresno, CA Office

**District Adjudications Officers** determine eligibility for a wide variety of benefits, review applications and often conduct applicant interviews. Adjudications Officers have the dual responsibility of providing courteous service to the public while being alert to the possibility of fraud.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK AT USCIS?

Visit [USAJOBS Online](https://www.uscis.gov/jobs) 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**