



News Release

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USCIS ANNOUNCES BACKLOG ELIMINATION UPDATE *Results Demonstrate Real Progress for America's Immigrants*

Washington, DC – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced today that the backlog has continued to decline for the processing of immigration benefits such as work authorization, permanent residency and naturalization. In the latest [update issued to Congress](#), USCIS reported the backlog, which had reached a high of 3.8 million cases in January 2004, was reduced to 1.5 million cases as of September 30, 2004. In all, USCIS has reduced the backlog by more than 2.3 million cases during fiscal year 2004.

“Today’s announcement continues the trend of showing tremendous progress in eliminating our backlog,” said USCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre. “However, USCIS will not rest on past success, but rather use it as a springboard to overcome the challenges that lie ahead. We will continue to realign our workforce with our workload to ensure that we meet the six-month cycle time target at every office for every form type by the end of fiscal year 2006.”

Highlighting the latest report to Congress was the record number of case completions. In all, USCIS officers completed almost 2.2 million cases during the fourth quarter while receiving nearly 1.3 million new cases. By completing 900,000 more cases than received, USCIS accomplished the most productive quarter in the Agency’s history.

The report credits much of the backlog elimination progress to productivity increases and process refinements. USCIS has prioritized its pending workload to ensure that applications filed by eligible applicants for whom benefits are immediately available are handled first. This concept is highlighted by the current USCIS practice of deciding Petitions for Immigration Relatives (I-130s) closer to the date on which a visa will become available.

The report also noted a reduction in cycle times for a number of services and benefits. For example, the cycle time for the Replacement of a Green Card (I-90) is now 5.4 months. At the beginning of fiscal year 2004, the cycle time for this same service was 12.7 months.

– USCIS –

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing our nation's security.