



Engagement Readout

The CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: USCIS' Backlog Reduction Efforts

On June 22, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman \(CIS Ombudsman\)](#) hosted a webinar to discuss U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) backlog reduction efforts.

During this session, [CIS Ombudsman Phyllis A. Coven](#) led a conversation with USCIS senior leaders about the agency's efforts to reduce the current backlog of immigration benefit requests. The discussion focused on the backlog's effect on USCIS' customers, and the personnel, policy, and technology initiatives the agency is undertaking to address the backlog and minimize its impact.

A total of 1,163 stakeholders participated in this engagement (22% attorneys/legal representatives, 45% applicants/petitioners/beneficiaries, 6% employers, 3% advocacy groups, 9% government employees, and 14% other). Below is a sample of the feedback received:

Employment-Based Form I-485 Adjudications

- Participants asked what criteria (e.g., receipt date, priority date or other) are being used to transfer and prioritize for adjudication employment-based Forms I-485, *Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status*, from the Texas and Nebraska Service Centers to the National Benefits Center.
- Applicants sought guidance on whether to file duplicate Forms I-485 if they are concerned that their case will not be adjudicated and receive an immigrant visa this fiscal year.
- Participants inquired whether employment-based adjustment of status applicants who have all documents complete and a current priority date can expect cases to be decided before the end of the fiscal year.
- Stakeholders asked USCIS to consider assigning visa numbers and/or granting conditional green cards to documentarily qualified employment-based adjustment of status applicants this fiscal year to ensure that visas are not wasted.
- Attendees suggested that USCIS run a query to identify every applicant with a pending Form I-485 and notify them to submit their Forms I-693, *Report of Medical Examination*

and Vaccination Record, or allow everyone who has not yet submitted Form I-693 to submit it to a centralized address, to help accelerate adjudications.

H-4 Employment Authorization Renewals Backlog

- Attendees asked USCIS to address the agency's plans to process the backlog of H-4 Form I-765, *Application for Employment Authorization* renewal requests.

Form I-129F Processing Times

- Stakeholders expressed concern about lengthy processing times for Form I-129F, *Petition for Alien Fiancé(e)*.

Humanitarian-Based Immigration Benefits

- Participants shared that they are seeing very little movement on U visa petitions despite the new bona fide determination process and sought information on USCIS' plans to reduce the backlog for U visa petitions.
- Stakeholders requested information on USCIS' efforts to process the more than 42,000 pending humanitarian parole applications for at-risk Afghans.
- Participants expressed concern about how asylum cases that have been pending for years are affected by the "last in, first out" rule that prioritizes recently submitted applications over older cases.

USCIS Contact Center and Online Filing and Tools

- Applicants and petitioners recommended making more forms available for online filing, including Form I-912, *Request for Fee Waiver*.
- Stakeholders recommended that the agency provide more granular, case-specific information through USCIS' online tools and Contact Center.

Speakers

Phyllis A. Coven, CIS Ombudsman, DHS

Nathan Stiefel, Deputy Ombudsman, DHS

Elissa McGovern, Chief of Policy at the CIS Ombudsman, DHS

Bertha Anderson, Chief of Public Engagement at the CIS Ombudsman, DHS

Doug Rand, Senior Advisor to the Director, USCIS

Dan Renaud, Senior Counselor to the Director, USCIS