



**Homeland
Security**

The Ombudsman's Webinar Series:

Overview of the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Law

On September 29, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman) hosted a public webinar to provide an overview of the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness (LRIF) law. Subject matter experts (SMEs) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) also participated in the webinar.

The U.S. government has granted Temporary Protected Status to Liberia, since 1991, due to in-country civil unrest as well as the Ebola epidemic, and/or been subject to a grant of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) pursuant to the President's constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations. In December 2019, President Trump announced that DED for Liberia would not be extended. The same year, he signed the LRIF provision under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. LRIF creates a pathway to lawful permanent residence for certain Liberian nationals and their close family members. Individuals who wish to adjust status under LRIF must properly file an Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status (Form I-485) that is received by USCIS on or before December 20, 2020.

USCIS estimates approximately 2,200-4,200 individuals are eligible under DED for Liberia. These individuals may be eligible to adjust status based on LRIF if they meet the requirements, which include demonstrating Liberian nationality and being continuously physically present in the U.S. during the period beginning on November 20, 2014 and ending on the date the applicant properly files Form I-485. As of September 8, 2020, USCIS has received 2,084 LRIF-based adjustment applications.

150 stakeholders joined this webinar (attorneys/legal representatives – 52%, employers – 4.5%, government workers – 30.5%, petitioners/applicants – 2%, and others – 11%). USCIS SMEs answered most of the 26 written questions during the presentation. Stakeholders expressed interest in the following topics: data/statistics related to LRIF; the possibility of USCIS granting an extension to the application period based on the COVID-19 health emergency; and what plans does USCIS have to conduct outreach about the LRIF. Below is a sample of the questions received:

- How many LRIF applications have been received, approved, and denied by USCIS?
- What are the current processing times for LRIF applications?
- How are the staffing reductions at the National Benefits Center impacting processing delays?
- How many pieces of evidence per year is USCIS looking for?
- Can a Liberian national with a pending Form I-485 (as an immediate relative) transfer that application to LRIF and supplement it with evidence (without having to pay for a new Form I-485)?

Speakers:

- Michael Dougherty, Ombudsman
- Bertha Anderson, Chief of Public Engagement and Outreach at the Ombudsman's Office
- Carrie Anderson, Senior Advisor at the Ombudsman's Office
- Rachel Riti and Erin Oshiro, Policy Analysts at USCIS
- Siw Bay-Hansen, Immigration Services Officer at USCIS