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Homeland Security

Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

November 2019

A Message From the New Ombudsman

Michael Dougherty

As some of you may know, I've been asked to return to this office to serve as the sixth Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, a role I held once before. I look forward to continuing to serve the American people and the individuals assisted directly by this office.

I have long been involved in the legal immigration system that is one of the hallmarks of this country. I believe in its success, which exists only when all aspects of the system are fully functional. I look forward to this opportunity to join in this office's role in contributing to that success.

As those of you who are familiar with our office already are aware, the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman is charged by statute with two essential roles.

First, Congress charged us with helping individual applicants and employers with their cases pending before the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). It has impressed me, in returning to the office, just how many people the office helps each day, each year. In Calendar Year 2018, the Ombudsman's Office received over 11,000 requests for case assistance and resolved nearly the same amount of cases. This key function of the Ombudsman's Office is to partner with USCIS to determine what has

gone wrong in each case, and ensuring each applicant or petitioner gets a full and fair adjudication. We do not advocate for a specific result, but instead work to get these cases back on track to a legally sound result.

Congress has also charged this office with identifying systemic difficulties in the administration of our legal immigration system, and to propose, wherever possible, recommendations to resolve those problems or address the underlying issues. This is as vital a task as the case work we do. We listen to stakeholders, identify trends, analyze data, and review all options to arrive at potential solutions. From this full analysis, we can develop recommendations that benefit the entire immigration system.

I believe wholeheartedly in the mission of this office and the people it serves, and consider it an honor to return to this post. I'm impressed too with the dedication of the current staff, who work tirelessly to accomplish these complementary missions. They fully understand that the mission of this office is to seek to improve the functioning of our immigration system, to point out the obstacles that hinder a smooth administration while upholding its integrity.

This office exists to improve the functioning of our legal immigration system. It is a privilege to represent that mission, assisting not just the seekers of immigration benefits, but the American people who benefit from a fair and functioning system.

Michael Dougherty, Ombudsman

Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

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