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Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

June 22, 2022



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

Disclaimer

This webinar material is intended solely as informational. It is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create or confer any right(s) or benefits(s), substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any individual or other party in benefit applications before DHS, in removal proceedings, in litigation with the United States, or in any other form or manner. This webinar material does not have the force of law, or of a DHS directive.

Questions

- Submit written questions to us through the “Q&A box” that appears to the right of the slide deck on your screen.
- We will review every question submitted and determine if we can address concerns arising from the stakeholder community.
- After the engagement, the CIS Ombudsman will work with USCIS to formulate responses to the themes that emerge from the questions.
- If you are a member of the media, please reach out to DHS Public Affairs with any inquiries.

Opening Remarks

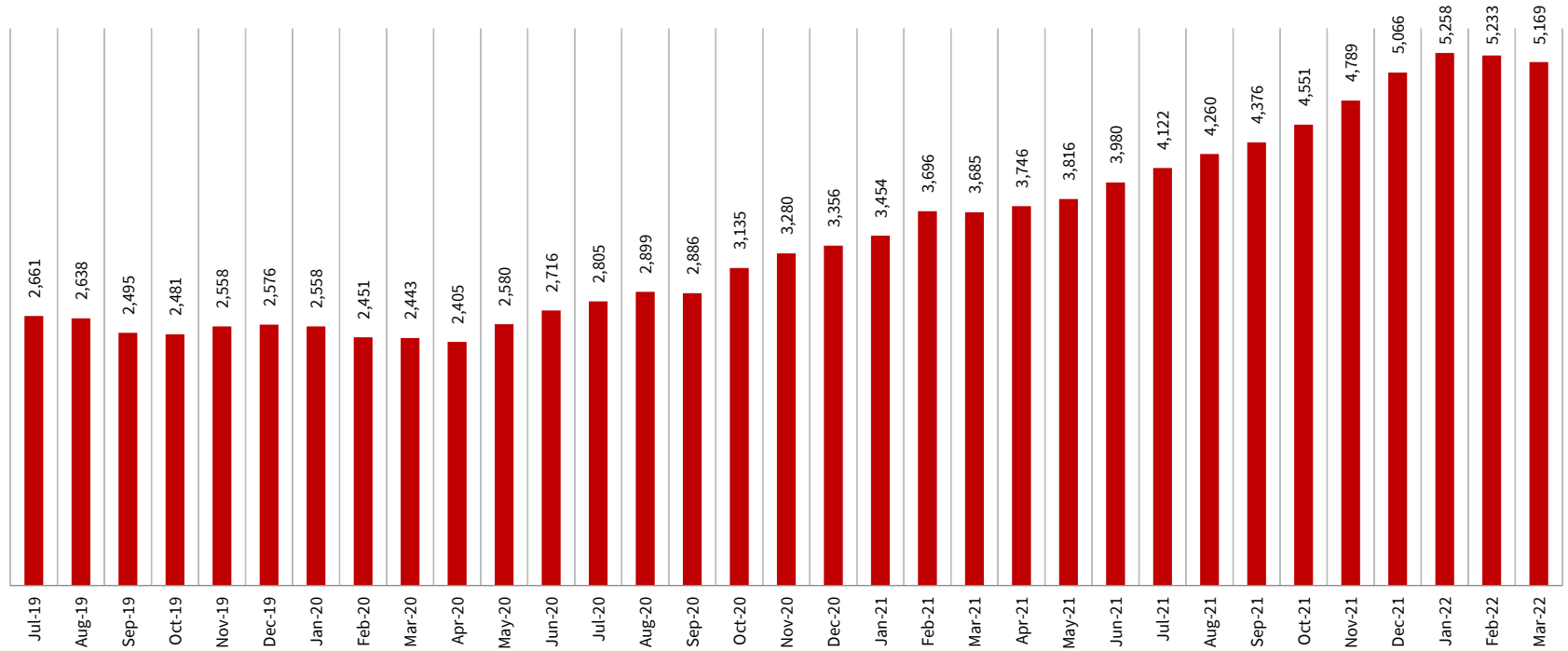
- CIS Ombudsman's mission
- CIS Ombudsman's Annual Report to Congress
- CIS Ombudsman's formal recommendations to USCIS

Overview and Reasons for the Backlog

- Scope of the backlog:
 - Approximately 8.5 million cases currently pending
 - 5.2 million cases considered to be in the backlog
- Reasons for the backlog:
 - Existing backlogs before COVID-19 pandemic
 - Office closures and reduced capacity for in person interviews and biometrics submissions due to COVID-19 pandemic
 - Decreased receipts and resulting budget shortfall
 - Hiring freeze

Backlog Trends

Backlog Trends: July 2019 – March 2022



Addressing Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Reusing biometrics
- Using video-interviewing technology
- Innovative solutions to maintain social distancing
- Drive-through naturalization oath ceremonies

Personnel and Staffing Initiatives

- Leveraged congressionally appropriated funding to cover overtime for adjudicators and hire new staff
- Lifted hiring freeze, adding staff and focusing allocations on adjudications
- Initially focused on filling supervisory roles, including internal promotions
- Building human resources infrastructure to support an increase in new staff
- Hiring and training new staff

New Cycle Time Goals

Set aggressive and achievable cycle time goals by the end of FY 2023.

NEW CYCLE TIME GOALS		
2 WEEKS		6 MONTHS
I-129 Premium		N-400 I-526
I-140 Premium		N-600 I-600
2 MONTHS		N-600K I-600A
I-129 Non-Premium		I-485 I-730
3 MONTHS		I-140 Non-Premium I-800
I-765		I-130 Immediate Relative I-800A
I-131 Advance Parole		I-129F Fiancé(e) I-90
I-539		I-290B I-821D Renewals
I-824		I-360
		I-102

Policy Initiatives

- Premium Processing
- EAD Initiatives
- EAD Temporary Final Rule (TFR)
- Visa Recapture

Technology Initiatives

- Transferred some non-adjudicative work to non-adjudicators
- Centralizing information delivery through USCIS website and Contact Center
- Leveraging electronic processing
- Using new and enhanced data sources
- Monitoring and redistributing workloads (as needed)
- Conducting remote office-to-office video interviews

Future Backlog Reduction Efforts

- Ongoing hiring initiatives
- Requesting continued appropriations to fund hiring and backlog reduction work
- Publishing a new, equitable fee rule
- Identifying and implementing process efficiencies and streamlining existing processes
- Digitizing files to facilitate file transfers and enable virtual processing and adjudication
- Increasing number of forms available for online filing



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Listening Session



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