The CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: USCIS’ Backlog Reduction Efforts
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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:
  o Approximately 8.5 million cases currently pending
  o 5.2 million cases considered to be in the backlog

• Reasons for the backlog:
  o Existing backlogs before COVID-19 pandemic
  o Office closures and reduced capacity for in person interviews and biometrics submissions due to COVID-19 pandemic
  o Decreased receipts and resulting budget shortfall
  o Hiring freeze
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
Set aggressive and achievable cycle time goals by the end of FY 2023.

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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
Listening Session