



**Homeland  
Security**

# Engagement Readout

## **The CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: Services for Noncitizen Veterans**

On August 2, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman \(CIS Ombudsman\)](#) hosted a webinar to share information about the important work being done across the Executive Branch to remove barriers and support our Nation's noncitizen service members, veterans, and the immediate family members of service members.

During this engagement, CIS Ombudsman [Phyllis Coven](#) was joined by representatives from DHS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide a general overview of services that each agency provides to veterans of the U.S. uniformed services, both in the United States and abroad.

DHS highlighted its commitment to bringing back to the United States noncitizen veterans, service members, and immediate family members of the military who were removed, as well as several department-wide initiatives assisting noncitizen military members and veterans.

USCIS provided an overview of naturalization, parole, and other immigration benefits available to veterans, service members, and their immediate families. USCIS also discussed the newly established Military Naturalization Promotion Program that employs outreach and communication strategies, working with the Department of Defense, the VA, military members, and their families to raise awareness of the importance of naturalization for service members.

CBP discussed the circumstances in which the agency would be involved with noncitizen veterans, such as admitting a veteran who has a valid visa to travel to the United States, or processing a parole document issued by USCIS to permit a noncitizen veteran to come into the United States to apply for naturalization, or in some cases, hosting the naturalization interview at CBP's port of entry.

ICE shared that cases involving noncitizen service members and veterans are handled with an exceptional degree of care. The removal of a noncitizen with prior military service must be authorized by the ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Field Office Director with the assistance of the ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisor.

The VA provided an overview of its Veterans Experience Action Centers (VEAC), a program established to proactively assist veterans in a selected state with a one-stop resource for all their needs.

In total, 244 stakeholders joined this webinar. Participants submitted 76 written questions and the speakers answered as many as possible during the engagement. Below is a sample of the questions received:

- Who can advocacy groups get in touch with to offer their services as intake and resource centers on behalf of this initiative to provide services for noncitizen veterans?
- Is it possible to reduce fees for military families, soldiers, and veterans that are going through the naturalization process?
- As military members move to another duty station, processing is often delayed because of changes of address. Is there a special stipulation for military families who receive orders to move so the process is not further delayed?
- What form of relief, if any, will be given to help veterans outside the United States reach a port of entry from various parts of the globe? Some of these individuals live in poverty and cannot afford to travel.

### **Speakers**

- Phyllis Coven, CIS Ombudsman
- Nathan Stiefel, Deputy CIS Ombudsman
- Bertha Anderson, Chief of Public Engagement at the CIS Ombudsman
- Debra Rogers, Director of the Immigrant Military Members and Veterans Initiative within the Office of the Secretary at DHS
- Kelly Ryan, Senior Advisor at USCIS
- Rená Cutlip-Mason, Supervisory Policy Analyst at USCIS
- Melissa Lin, Policy Analyst at USCIS
- Emily Ballas, Policy Analyst at USCIS
- Wendy Gonzalez, Supervisory Policy Analyst at USCIS
- Ashley Feasley, Director of the Policy Directorate at CBP
- Raymond Linnan, Unit Chief, Policy Unit at ICE
- Tahmika Jackson, Special Counsel at the VA
- John Boerstler, Chief Veteran Experience Officer at the VA
- Ray Kelley, Senior Advisor at the VA

### **Contact Information**

## USCIS

**Military Help Line:** 1-877-CIS-4MIL (1-877-247-4645) TTY 800-877-8339

**Email:** [militaryinfo@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:militaryinfo@uscis.dhs.gov)

**Website:** <https://www.uscis.gov/military/military-help-line>

## ICE

**For Case Review:** <https://www.ice.gov/ICEcasereview>

**Enforcement and Removal Operations Detention Reporting and Information Line:** 1-888-351-4024. Live, trained operators are available Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time to respond to inquiries from those in ICE detention and from community members.

## **Additional Resources**

- CBP Ports of Entry: <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/ports-entry>
- CBP Local Port of Entry Locator Tool: <https://www.cbp.gov/contact/ports>
- VA Welcome Kit: <https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/>
- Sign up to receive #Vetresources: [www.va.gov/VetResources](http://www.va.gov/VetResources)
- VA Veterans Experience Office: <https://www.va.gov/ve/>
- List of Virtual Events for Veterans, their Families, Caregivers, and Survivors: <https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/>
- Department of Justice Servicemember and Veterans Initiative: <https://www.justice.gov/servicemembers>
- U.S. Armed Forces Legal Assistance: <https://legalassistance.law.af.mil/>
- American Bar Association, Standing Committee on Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (LAMP): [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_assistance\\_military\\_personnel/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_assistance_military_personnel/)
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Office of Servicemember Affairs (OSA): <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/servicemembers/>