



**Homeland
Security**

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CIS OMBUDSMAN TO THE DIRECTOR, USCIS

To: Eduardo Aguirre, USCIS Director
Cc: Jim Loy, Deputy Secretary
From: Prakash Khatri, CIS Ombudsman
Date: February 25, 2005
Re: Recommendation that whenever USCIS implements a pilot program which directly impacts customer service, USCIS either: 1) at the onset of the pilot program publishes public notice of when the pilot program will begin and terminate, including specific information to customers on the subsequent handling of receipted petitions/applications affected by the pilot program; or 2) provide 30-days notice before terminating a pilot program, during which USCIS shall provide its customers with specific information as to the subsequent handling of receipted petitions/applications affected by the termination.

I. BACKGROUND

On January 27, 2005, USCIS terminated its “90-day adjustment processing” pilot program conducted at the New York City District Office. This pilot program had been operating for over 8 months prior to its termination. The termination came with no public notice, resulting in complaints to the Ombudsman and USCIS. Customers who filed adjustment applications with the USCIS New York City District Office were provided no information concerning the future status and processing of their applications. As of this date, USCIS has not provided these customers with any information as to how USCIS plans to complete these applications.

II. JUSTIFICATION

USCIS’ abrupt termination of its New York City District Office pilot program, followed by USCIS’ failure to provide customers with information concerning the subsequent handling of affected petitions/applications reflected negatively on USCIS’ customer service image. USCIS’ customers have informed the Ombudsman that the New York City pilot program’s abrupt termination and failure to provide any information regarding these cases demonstrated a lack of concern by USCIS for its customers and a disregard of USCIS’ case-processing obligations.

III. BENEFITS

Customer Service:

Adoption of this recommendation will demonstrate to USCIS' customers that USCIS is committed to improving customer service by considering the impact on customers of pilot program decisions.

USCIS Efficiency:

Adoption of this recommendation will reduce the number of complaints and inquiries received by USCIS – as well as expenditure of USCIS assets necessary to respond to complaints, inquiries, and possible litigation – upon the ending of any pilot program which directly impacts customer service. The effort expended to inform the customer base, at the onset of a pilot program or prior to its termination, is minimal compared with the subsequent response effort.

National Security:

Adoption of this recommendation will not negatively affect national security in any manner.