



Memorandum

TO: Richard Flowers
Acting Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

FROM: Michael Aytes /S/ June 3, 2009
Acting Deputy Director

SUBJECT: Response to Recommendation 41, Recommendation on Payment Methods for
USCIS Filing Fees and Other Costs

Recommendation

The CIS Ombudsman has recommended that USCIS implement:

- A batch filing system that would enable high volume filers to pay USCIS fees online;
- An online shopping cart mechanism that would simplify the process of identifying appropriate USCIS forms, calculating related fees, and submitting payments;
- An expansion of the payment options within the e-Filing system to include all USCIS fees, and;
- Additional visual and written aids within current instructions to ensure that payments are submitted correctly.

USCIS Response

- 1. Implement a batch filing system that would enable high volume filers to pay USCIS fees online.**

USCIS concurs that a batch filing system would be beneficial to high volume filers such as attorneys, representatives, and others; however, we do not currently have the technological capabilities to implement this recommendation. In November 2008, a task order was awarded to International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) to serve as Solutions Architect to transform

USCIS processes. The solution provides multiple channels for high volume filers to submit benefit requests, including traditional paper applications through the Lockbox, a customer portal, kiosks at USCIS offices, and electronic submissions for batch transmission. Although these operational enhancements will be implemented incrementally, we anticipate the batch filing to be deployed early during the life-span of the contract.

2. Implement an online shopping cart mechanism that would simplify the process of identifying appropriate USCIS forms, calculating related fees, and submitting payments.

USCIS concurs with this recommendation. USCIS plans to have an online “shopping cart” approach to filing immigration applications and petitions included in the USCIS Transformation Initiative that is currently underway. Although not described as a “shopping cart” under the IBM Solution contract, customers will get immediate feedback to resolve shortfalls in their benefit requests and find alternative benefits for which they may be eligible. This functionality is described by IBM as a filing “wizard.” The solution will also support e-payments and e-filing of applications and supporting documentation. USCIS anticipates these options becoming available to customers in later 2012 as apart of the transformation initiative.-

USCIS is currently taking steps to improve our internal controls to ensure the security of our deposits and make deposits in a more timely manner. USCIS will deploy Paper Check Conversion and Credit Card Readers at all Field Offices. These scanning capabilities allow electronic deposit of funds through the Federal Reserve to U.S. Treasury Department accounts. This functionality will enhance USCIS’ ability to process payments more quickly and we believe that our customers will find this option more convenient.

3. Implement an expansion of the payment options within the e-Filing system to include all USCIS fees.

USCIS concurs that an expansion of electronic payment filing would be advantageous to applicants, petitioners, and their representatives. We are also in agreement with the CIS Ombudsman that having the ability to pay all fees electronically would enhance the service offered to the public. The current system, however, is relatively old and cannot support an electronic payment independent of an e-filed application or petition. We believe the best process to achieve this is through the new systems being developed as part of our Transformation initiative. USCIS looks forward to sharing such innovative support systems with the CIS Ombudsman as they are rolled-out.

4. Implement additional visual and written aids within current instructions to ensure that payments are submitted correctly.

USCIS thanks the CIS Ombudsman for this recommendation. In the summer of 2009, USCIS plans to post a visual on our website illustrating how a check should be completed. We have worked to improve how we notify applicants and petitioners of the required form fees. On our “Immigration Forms” web page, we have the required fees listed next to each form. On July 30, 2007, we released a booklet with the fee schedule (Form G-1055). In February 2009, we added a

page to our website, www.uscis.gov, entitled "Paying Immigration Fees." This page includes information on acceptable forms of payment as well as information on how to complete a check or money order. USCIS will continue to provide customer guidance as needed on how to submit proper payments.