



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

USCIS TODAY



A MESSAGE FROM USCIS DIRECTOR EMILIO T. GONZÁLEZ

This issue of USCIS Today is packed with important new information on agency operations and announcements. Inside, you'll learn about new USCIS leadership arrivals, 4th of July naturalization ceremonies, the latest Outstanding Americans by Choice, a backlog elimination update and the hard work of our outstanding employees.

When USCIS was created 3 years ago, we had a backlog of 3.4 million cases. Today, that number is approaching the 300,000 mark. As USCIS celebrates the 4th of July by naturalizing more than 18,000 new Americans, we'll make added progress toward meeting our goal of a 6-month processing time on every application and eliminating the backlog. Through enhanced national security measures and improved efficiency in the way we handle applications, USCIS has made great positive strides forward in 2006.

By advancing a spirit of innovation and progress, we are positioning USCIS to be the world's premier immigration benefits administrator and a leading component within the Department of Homeland Security. Toward these goals, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Jonathan R. Scharfen as the new Deputy Director of USCIS.

JONATHAN SCHARFEN – USCIS DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Jonathan "Jock" Scharfen relieves Robert Divine as the new Deputy Director at USCIS. Robert Divine, who served as Acting Director from July 2005 to January 2006 and as Acting Deputy Director from January 2006 until now, will return to his original appointment as Chief Counsel.

Retired from the United States Marine Corps in August 2003 at the rank of Colonel after 25-years of active duty service, Mr. Scharfen has served as Chief Counsel/Deputy Staff Director of the House International Relations Committee (HIRC) since April 2003. Prior to joining the HIRC, Mr. Scharfen served as the Deputy Legal Adviser on the National Security Council staff, where he served three tours and three presidents during the course of his Marine Corps career.

Mr. Scharfen held a number of leadership and legal positions in the Marines and was deployed with the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade for Operation Desert Storm. In 2000, Mr. Scharfen returned to the National Security Council staff as Deputy Legal Adviser and Director until he assumed the role as Chief Counsel of the House International Relations Committee in April 2003 and became Deputy Staff Director at the Committee in 2006.

Mr. Scharfen received a B.A. from the University of Virginia, a J.D. from the University of Notre Dame, an LL.M. from the University of San Diego, and attended the U.S. Army War College where he studied National Security Strategy.

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UPCOMING EVENTS, PRESS RELEASES AND IMMIGRATION POLICY NEWS

JULY 2006

“USCIS: Delivering on the Promise”

[USCIS Celebrates Independence Day](#)

[News You Can Use](#)

[USCIS Welcomes New U.S. Citizens aboard the
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USCIS: AMERICA'S IMMIGRATION SERVICE

USCIS CELEBRATES INDEPENDENCE DAY

WILL HOST MORE THAN 150 SPECIAL JULY 4TH CEREMONIES

To commemorate the 230th birthday of the United States, USCIS will host more than 150 special citizenship ceremonies for 18,000 men, women and children in cities and towns across America over the Independence holiday week from July 1 through July 7.

As we celebrate our Nation's independence, these citizenship ceremonies are a tribute to the memory of our founding fathers who fought to secure freedom and liberty for every citizen. Through these ceremonies, USCIS is doing its part to foster a greater appreciation for our civic values by welcoming new citizens into our American family.

To highlight the importance of U.S. citizenship, USCIS naturalization ceremonies are being held at prominent national and historic landmarks from coast to coast. Many of the events will feature special guest speakers and local community leaders.

For more information on USCIS 4th of July events, or to find the Naturalization Ceremony taking place nearest you, please see the [Event List and Location Announcement](#) at [USCIS.gov](#).



4th of July Fireworks on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

FROM THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

[USCIS Issues Final Rule Regarding Affidavits of Support, 6/21/06](#)

USCIS published in the Federal Register (71 FR 35732) a final rule regarding Affidavits of Support (Form I-864). The final rule makes the [Affidavit of Support process](#) less burdensome for sponsors while continuing to ensure that each intending immigrant has a sponsor who has sufficient income and/or assets to support the sponsored immigrant. USCIS has also released an [Affidavit of Support Fact Sheet](#) and [FAQ](#) for more information on the new rules.



[DHS Announces Publication of Notice in the Federal Register for 12-Month Extension of TPS for Nationals of El Salvador, 6/15/06](#)

DHS and USCIS announced the publication of a Notice in the Federal Register designating a 12-month extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for nationals of El Salvador until September 9, 2007. Under this extension, those who have already been granted TPS are eligible to live and work in the United States for an additional 12 months and continue to maintain their status. USCIS has also released a helpful [El Salvador TPS FAQ](#).

[Public Notice: USCIS Notifies Public of New Policy Concerning Fiancé\(e\) Petitions, 6/13/06](#)

USCIS announced that in order to comply with provisions of the International Marriage Brokers Regulation Act of 2005 (IMBRA), it will need to issue "Requests for Evidence" for more than 10,000 Alien Fiancé(e) Petitions (Form I-129F) currently being held at USCIS Service Centers. USCIS will begin immediately to issue RFEs to affected petitioners using an RFE template that has been approved and cleared by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

VISIT THE [OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS](#) FOR THE LATEST NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM USCIS

USCIS: PROMOTING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

DIRECTOR GONZÁLEZ WELCOMES 150 NEW U.S. CITIZENS ABOARD USS GEORGE WASHINGTON

US NAVY HOSTS MILITARY NATURALIZATION ON AIRCRAFT CARRIER



On Flag Day, June 14th, just below the flight deck on the nuclear powered supercarrier, the USS George Washington, 150 immigrant members of the U.S. military became American citizens. Many of the naturalized men and women recently returned from serving combat tours in the Middle East.

USCIS Director Emilio T. González administered the Oath of Allegiance and offered congratulatory remarks to the new citizens: "Thank you for your service, and for your dedication to Duty, Honor and Country. Every American draws inspiration from your courage – and from the sacrifice of all the men and women in our Nation's armed forces."

Changes in immigration law have made it easier for qualified military personnel to become U.S. citizens. In addition, USCIS has created a streamlined citizenship process for military personnel serving on active-duty status or recently discharged that offers overseas naturalization for service members in combat zones. Members of the U.S. Armed Forces do not pay a fee when filing for citizenship, and must complete one year of active duty service before becoming eligible for the benefit.

To learn more, visit the [USCIS' Military Naturalization](http://www.uscis.gov) page at <http://www.uscis.gov>



DON'T WAIT IN LINE...GO ONLINE!!!

[USCIS.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) features an evolving suite of Internet based services that decrease waiting times for customers. The [INFOPASS](#) Online appointment system, our 24-hour [National Customer Service Call Center](#), the ability to file and check the status of applications online using our [E-Filing Online Application Center](#), and other electronic media have improved our ability to both tackle the existing backlog of cases, while handling an increasing number of applicants.

USCIS: INTEGRITY, RESPECT, INGENUITY

OUTSTANDING AMERICANS BY CHOICE

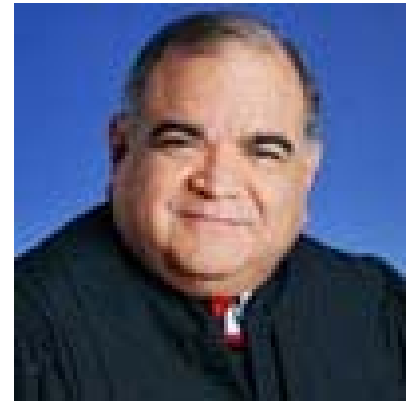
The newly launched [Outstanding American by Choice](#) initiative recognizes the outstanding achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to their country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans. Throughout the year, USCIS Director González will continue to recognize naturalized citizens who have made significant contributions to both their communities and adopted country.



The Honorable Jose E. Martinez U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida

Jose E. Martinez was confirmed as a U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida on September 13, 2002. Judge Martinez was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He attended the University of Miami where he earned undergraduate and law degrees and was president of the Iron Arrow Honor Society.

Judge Martinez was a legal officer in the U.S. Navy and an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida. In July of 1991, he joined the law firm now known as Gutierrez & Associates as counsel and became a name partner in September 1992. During a two-year leave from his firm, he became the regional director for the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement within the U.S. Department of Justice. Judge Martinez served as the vice chairman of the Federal Court Practice Committee of the Florida Bar.



Gepsie M. Metellus Executive Director, Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center

Gepsie M. Metellus is Cofounder and Executive Director of Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center, a not-for-profit social service organization that serves the Haitian community of South Florida. Sant La seeks to provide information and referral services in the areas of social services, education, housing opportunities, economic self-sufficiency, and access to healthcare and legal counsel.

Ms. Metellus was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She received an undergraduate degree from Queens College, City University of New York and a graduate degree from Florida International University. She is a founding member of Haitian Women of Miami, the Association of Haitian Educators of Dade County, and the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition. Ms. Metellus has authored and coauthored several books on the Haitian community in South Florida. She is also well known in Florida for her advocacy work on behalf of Haitian-American women and Haitian political refugees.



Guarione M. Diaz President and CEO, Cuban American National Council, Inc. (CANC)

Guarione M. Diaz is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cuban American National Council, Inc., a private nonprofit organization involved in education, employment, housing, and economic development services. The CANC has helped over 3,500 at-risk students remain in school; made 36,800 direct job placements; created more than 4,400 new jobs; awarded over 85 internships to local students; and built new housing units for 1,700 persons of low and moderate income.

Mr. Diaz was born in Havana, Cuba and holds an undergraduate degree from St. Francis College in New York City and a graduate degree from Columbia University. In 1994, Mr. Diaz was appointed as U.S. Ombudsman/Civilian Liaison at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba where he assisted over 30,000 Cuban rafters and provided coordination among the U.S. military, civilian government agencies, and the public at large. He has been actively involved in many community organizations and has served on the Board of Directors of a number of local and national organizations.



FACES OF AMERICA

NEW CITIZENS...UNIQUE STORIES

AUSTIN GRAY - CHINA



Delmar Gray and Wang Hui in China (above) and the newly naturalized Austin Gray at a ceremony in Utah with his American parents (below).



[SHARE YOUR STORY:CONTACT USCIS](#)

Delmar Gray wasn't looking for another son. The Boise, Idaho dentist and his wife Luann had five children of their own, three of them married. But when he went to China in 2001 on a charity trip to treat orphans, he encountered the nine-year-old future Austin Gray, then known as Wang Hui.

Wang Hui was an engaging youngster who took to following the dentist around the orphanage. Delmar had learned to speak Mandarin during a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Taiwan, so they could communicate. Almost inevitably, the two clicked. In that moment, need, want, and an expansiveness of heart came together.

In what became annual trips, Delmar continued to do dentistry at the orphanage, seeing Wang Hui some years, not seeing him in others. Ultimately, in May 2005, he and Luann flew to China with a large group of dentists and wives volunteering in two orphanages. On this trip, Luann met Wang Hui, who would soon be too old to adopt.

"By Chinese law, adopted children must be out of the country by age 14," said Luann. "We did a mad rush to get the adoption paperwork completed. Austin arrived here January 14 of this year, and turned 14 on Jan 20."

Now a coltish teen, and learning English as he attends public school, Austin is a bigger version of the round-faced kid seen in a group photo taken during Delmar's first visit to the orphanage. Prophetically, in the older photo he's comfortably nestled in his future dad's lap. Sometimes, you just know.

IMMIGRATION THROUGH THE YEARS...USCIS COMMEMORATES THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BASIC NATURALIZATION ACT

On June 29, 1906 Congress passed the Basic Naturalization Act of 1906, the legislation that forms the basis of modern U.S. naturalization policy. The Act created the first federal naturalization service and placed it within the existing Bureau of Immigration to form the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, precursor of the INS and USCIS.

Prior to 1906, naturalizations were not subject to federal oversight and could be performed in "any common court of record." This decentralized system lent its self to inconsistency and fraud. To reduce fraud and to provide for fair, uniform, and efficient naturalization proceedings, the Act required the federal naturalization service to standardize naturalization forms, fees, and procedures, collect and maintain copies of all naturalization records, and verify that all applicants for citizenship had been properly admitted into the country before presenting them to the court for naturalization.

Over the course of the next century, the naturalization service would expand it's role in overseeing and implementing naturalization policy, but the duties required by the Basic Naturalization Act still remain at the core of the USCIS mission.

For more information, visit the [USCIS History Office & Library](#).

USCIS: IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE



“How Do I...?”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AT USCIS

HOW DO I...FINANCIALLY SPONSOR SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO IMMIGRATE TO THE U.S.

Under the law, every person who immigrates based on a relative petition must have a financial sponsor. If you choose to sponsor your relative's immigration by filing a **Form I-130**, Petition for Alien Relative, then when the time comes for actual immigration you must agree to be the financial sponsor and file an affidavit of support. If you do not meet the financial qualifications at that time, you must still file a **Form I-864**, Affidavit of Support, and accept responsibility, but you and your relative must also find other individuals who meet the requirements and are willing to make this commitment and also file affidavits of support.

What is the purpose of the affidavit of support?

The affidavit of support helps ensure that new immigrants will not need to rely on public benefits such as Food Stamps, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. If a person for whom you file an affidavit of support becomes a permanent resident and is later given certain public benefits, the agency that gave the benefits can require that you repay that money.

Who has to have an affidavit of support in order to immigrate?

Anyone applying to be a permanent resident through a family member must have a financial sponsor. A sponsor is also required for a family member coming to work for a relative, or for a company in which a relative owns 5 percent or more of the company. Petitioners, those persons sponsoring someone's immigration, must file an affidavit of support. If they do not, then their sponsorship is not complete, and the person will not be given permission to immigrate based on that petition.

The “How Do I...?” Section of USCIS Today contains answers to frequently asked questions from USCIS customers. Additional information and more answers are available English and Spanish on the [How Do I...?](#) section of USCIS.gov.

What are the financial qualifications for an affidavit of support?

The law requires a sponsor to prove an income level at or above 125% of the Federal poverty level. (For active duty military personnel, the income requirement is 100% of the poverty level when sponsoring his/her husband, wife, or children.) If your income does not meet the requirement, your assets such as checking and savings accounts, stocks, bonds, or property may be considered in determining your financial ability. Federal poverty levels are updated each year by the Department of Health and Human Services. You can check current minimums at their website at www.aspe.hhs.gov.

I filed the I-130 immigrant petition for my relative but I do not meet the minimum income requirement. Can anyone else be a financial sponsor?

If you do not meet the financial qualifications, the income of certain other household members can be added in to your income level if they sign a contract on **Form I-864A**, Affidavit of Support Contract Between Sponsor and Household Member, agreeing to make their income and/or assets available for the support of the relative applying for permanent residence. If you still cannot meet the financial qualifications, another person must complete a separate affidavit of support to become a joint financial sponsor of the person's immigration. The joint sponsor must meet all sponsorship requirements separately, including the minimum income requirements for his/her household, and must be willing to assume, along with you, financial liability for the sponsored immigrant(s). All sponsors must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents domiciled in the U.S. and be at least 18 years of age when they file the affidavit of support.

When and how do I file the affidavit of support?

You do not need to file it with your petition. When the person reaches the front of the line to immigrate based on your I-130 petition, he or she will have to submit the affidavit of support with an application for an immigrant visa or permanent residence. Just follow the instructions for the affidavit and submit all the necessary supporting documents with the visa or residence application at that time.

2006 DIRECTOR'S AWARD CEREMONY

USCIS RECOGNIZES EMPLOYEE EXCELLENCE

Don Crocetti has been the driving force behind the success of the USCIS Office of Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS). As part of the newly created National Security and Verification Directorate, Don leads FDNS in efforts to strengthen national security, enhance the integrity of the legal immigration system and detect and deter benefit fraud.

Under Don's direction, USCIS developed the Benefit Fraud Assessment Program to help determine the fraud rate among various immigration applications and petitions. As a result of these and other combined efforts to target illegal activity, USCIS has assisted other DHS immigration components in a number of successful indictments and prosecutions involving benefit fraud.

Don has provided unwavering vision and steadfast determination in leading the more than 160 FDNS officers and guiding the formation of the office. Today, FDNS is a strong and reliable partner to the adjudication staffs within USCIS, as well as to the law enforcement, national security and intelligence communities. Don's personal efforts have greatly enhanced fraud detection and improved information sharing with USCIS' many law enforcement, security and intelligence partners today and into the future. In recognition of his critical work, Don was awarded the Securing America's Promise Award, the highest and most prestigious award granted within USCIS for sustained overall contribution by an individual to USCIS and its mission.

SECURING AMERICA'S PROMISE AWARD



FDNS Director Don Crocetti receives the Securing America's Promise Award from Director Gonzalez

USCIS MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD



New Orleans District Director Stella Jarina receives the USCIS Manager of the Year Award from Director Gonzalez

New Orleans District Director **M. Stella Jarina** and her staff were on track to achieve or exceed all of their work production goals in-line with USCIS national priorities to eliminate the application backlog. Then Hurricane Katrina struck. Stella first ensured that all her employees were safe and appropriately redeployed given consideration for their circumstances and families. She then quickly reestablished District operations at the Memphis, TN sub-office with the cooperation of USCIS staff there.

Returning to New Orleans shortly after the storm, Stella led employee efforts to recover more than 4,000 files and records and transfer them by truck to Memphis. By putting their own needs aside to help quickly restore USCIS operations in the District, Stella and her employees helped countless thousands of customers receive emergency service and replacement immigration documents. During the transition, she never lost sight of achieving the District's backlog elimination targets. Only sixteen days after the storm, the New Orleans District resumed Naturalization ceremonies from Memphis.

In an effort that normally takes two years, Stella reopened the renovated New Orleans District Office on June 6, 2006, less than 10 months following the Hurricane. Through the hardship of the past year, she has inspired and sustained her staff with her positive spirit and decisive thinking. For her leadership under pressure, Stella Jarina was awarded the Director's Manager of the Year Award.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT USCIS OCOMM 202.272.1200

REAL PEOPLE, REAL PROGRESS

OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Background:

John Wallace "Wally" Bird, co-recipient with Jennifer Higgins of the 2006 Director's Compass Award, entered on duty as Officer in Charge, Havana on May 2004. Wally started his federal career with legacy INS in November 1994 as an Asylum Officer in the Newark office. Before joining INS, he practiced immigration law and entertainment law. His overseas experience includes living in Egypt, Belgium, Haiti and Mexico working with USCIS refugee programs in Guam, Kenya, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Colombia. Wally was recently selected for the position of Chief, Caribbean and Americas Overseas Unit in the Office of Refugee Affairs in Washington.



Name: J. Wally Bird
Position: Officer in Charge
Location: Havana, Cuba

What are some of the conditions you deal with working in Cuba?

My wife and I have experienced joy, fear, anger and wonder while living in Cuba under special rules for American government workers. Cuba is the only non-fraternization post in the world and American diplomats are precluded from having romantic or even routine friendships with Cubans. We may not leave the borders of the city of Havana and most of our supplies must be ordered in advance and shipped to the island via diplomatic pouch. We have no mail service to the United States, and we hand-carry personal mail for everyone when we travel. Americans have a very close community here, U.S. Government workers are treated as enemies of the Cuban Government.

On the other hand, we are constantly moved by the resilient Cuban people who make do without the availability of material goods, make two weeks worth of bad government rations last for four weeks, and who are still able to make an important impact as some of the finest artists, athletes, doctors and intellectuals in the world. These people advance despite severe and onerous repression and politicization. They show us sincere hospitality and kindness even though they are constantly bombarded with anti-U.S. propaganda. Every day I walk through the doors of our office I know that for at least one more day USCIS will give protection and freedom to a few more of Cuba's bravest patriots.

What's the most memorable moment you've experienced at USCIS?

Last summer, my wife and I traveled from Havana on a flight that carried 70 refugees. As we walked into the airport, we were aware that all eyes were upon us. Everyone knows who we are in Havana due to our work, and each refugee carried my signature on his or her travel letter authorizing admission to the United States. Refugees who leave Cuba are in a very difficult situation because the Cuban Government releases them from work and takes their belongings and homes when they apply for an exit permit, sometimes weeks before the actual flight out of Havana. These people leave nothing behind but their families, who may be too frightened to see them off at the airport for fear of punishment by their government. My wife and I sensed their trepidation as they approached a Cuban immigration official for permission to board the airplane. We have seen refugees stopped at this point despite having received exit permission, only to be turned back to continue living in a waking nightmare without homes or belongings. We were overwhelmed by emotions expressed by the passengers who were leaving their homes and families. The most powerful part of this experience was when several passengers walked by me, tapped me on the shoulder and whispered, "Gracias senior."

How has USCIS changed since its establishment in March 2003?

I really believe that the more important question is "How has Immigration changed since September 11, 2001?" The attacks against our Nation galvanized a resolve that will define our professional generation for decades to come. Ensuring the security of our nation will always be a work-in-progress, and as part of this evolving effort, it has been truly inspirational to witness the development of successful initiatives like US VISIT which demonstrate coordination between United States Government agencies and other American and foreign professionals. But to answer your question, USCIS has changed by increasing technological efficiency in the workplace, enhanced security initiatives, the establishment of better biometric tools, and decreasing backlogs. My favorite changes are the recent creation of the Refugee Corps and the Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate. These two new entities are examples of how USCIS is creating components focused on particular missions with increased specialized knowledge and area-specific accountability.

VISIT [USAJOBS ONLINE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OPENINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES AT USCIS AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT USCIS OCOMM 202.272.1200