



Update

September 25, 2001

Following the monthly national meeting held between Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Immigration Services Division (ISD) in Washington, D.C., ISD will present notes from the meeting that capture what was said and what questions were asked. While the notes are not intended to be verbatim, they do represent the topics covered.

Impact of September 11, 2001 Events on ISD's Customers

Bill Yates, Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner for Immigration Services, opened the meeting by asking CBOs to communicate to their customers that INS is exploring options on how to best accommodate victims and dependents of victims affected by the events of September 11, 2001. A working group is determining what options fall under the purview of INS and what may require legislative action.

Mr. Yates has asked the CBOs to provide input on possible areas where customers affected by this tragedy may need assistance.

The INS has heard rumors that aliens who are out of status have been hesitant to report victims for fear that INS would use this information against them. Mr. Yates assured the CBOs that INS would not pursue these aliens with the intent of detaining or deporting them.

Budget and Examination Fee Account

The INS has come under criticism for falling short on production and customer service efforts when Congress has granted the agency substantial appropriations above and beyond the money available to ISD through the Examinations Fee Account. In response to this criticism, Mr. Yates provided a year-by-year breakdown of appropriated dollars provided by Congress. However, he also itemized the funds that Congress reallocated from the Examinations Fee Account to pay for programs not originally included for funding by the Account. In total, since FY 1996, the Congress has provided Immigration Services with \$355 million in appropriated funds. During the same period, Congress has directed the Fee Account to spend \$454 million on other programs. The loss to Immigration Services is almost \$100 million over the last five years.

The INS has proposed a new fee schedule that would take effect in January 2002. The new fees have been adjusted to capture the increased cost of processing and/or

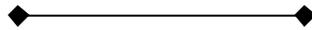
adjudicating applications and petitions. So far, INS has received more than 600 comments on the proposal. As called for in the Immigration Services Program's Business Plan for the next 5 - 10 years, ISD hopes to eventually reduce the costs of processing applications and petitions (i.e., through efforts such as electronic filing) and pass the cost savings on to customers by reducing fees.



Production Management

Mr. Yates provided an update on INS' progress in meeting its goals for production management:

- During FY 2001 the INS will have completed more than 800,000 applications for naturalization and 800,000 applications for adjustment of status.
- Based on a detailed statistical analysis of workload, the INS expects that by the end of the third quarter, FY 2002, it will have hired enough staff to continue to process new applications received as well as gradually reduce processing times and the number of pending adjustment of status cases.
- The INS has provided district application volume analysis to GAO and hopes to provide it to CBOs soon.



Business Plan Update

During April, ISD contracted with Booz-Allen Hamilton (BAH) to develop a business and implementation plan that serves as a cohesive framework focusing on four areas: Customers and Stakeholders; People (Employees); Management Infrastructure; and Technology and Processing. Within each of these areas are goals (e.g., serve our customers proactively and equitably to create understanding and appropriate action) and strategies (e.g., provide benefits quickly and accurately to those who are entitled to them).

Under the strategies fall more than 40 initiatives that support the Immigration Services program's efforts in achieving its mission including: eliminating application backlogs; expanding service outlets in areas where customers live; accessing a complete customer history through a single automated interface; simplifying form instructions and translating them into foreign languages; and developing a capability within INS to respond more quickly to legislative and regulatory changes (e.g., TPS, 245(i), LIFE, etc.)

The ISD will establish advisory groups that will include CBO representation to provide input to plan implementation. On October 30, preceding the CBO meeting, ISD will make a presentation on the plan and solicit their participation and ensure that ISD keeps on track in this effort.



LIFE Act

Several topics were covered relating to the Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act.

- The final Legalization Rule is undergoing clearance at INS.
- The INS has received a total of approximately 20,000 applications related to the LIFE Act. The number of weekly receipts continues to increase--receipts from the week of September 17 grew 25% over the previous week.
- The INS has made selections for 655 of 900 staff positions. Training for new hires began on October 1.
- The INS will conduct its first LIFE Act-related interviews with applicants in Los Angeles on October 22.
- The INS has put considerable effort into enhancing facilities to allow for more staff and more room for conducting interviews with applicants. The INS should complete construction and refurbishing by the end of the calendar year.

For more information on this topic, please see the [LIFE Act](#) page on the INS web.



Miscellaneous Q&A

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| Q. <i>What is happening with restructuring?</i> | jurisdiction and determines where and how it will conduct ceremonies. |
| R. The Commissioner and the Administration have committed to a split between Services and Enforcement. No other definitive information is available at this time. | |
| Q. <i>How does the INS determine when and where naturalization ceremonies will take place?</i> | Q. <i>Is the Vermont Service Center (VSC) denying an excessive number of requests for fee waivers for N-400s?</i> |
| R. For administrative hearings, the District Director determines the time and place, depending upon space and resources available. For judicial ceremonies, the Court has | R. No, the VSC returns about 45% of the fee waiver requests back to the customer for additional information. INS will work with customers and CBOs to ensure there is clear understanding about fee waiver requests. Rather than developing a new form for fee waivers, INS will look into a checklist to provide to customers. |

Q. *Do offices have the option of waiving I-485 interviews?*

R. While the policy is not widespread, a 1992 memo gave districts the authority to waive interviews in certain cases. The INS will provide a copy of the memorandum at the next meeting.

Q. *What is the status on the Indochinese Adjustment Rule which will provides for the adjustment of status to lawful permanent residents for 5,000 nationals of Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia?*

R. The INS is responding to comments provided by the Department of Justice.

Q. *What is the status of visa number availability?*

R. We are seeing some regression in family visa number availability. For more information, see the Department of State's Visa Bulletin [LINK TO http://www.travel.state.gov/visa_bulletin.html]

Q. *Are the Naturalization Quality Procedures (NQP) a burden on the budget?*

R. To a degree, yes; but the number of hours spent per case is dropping due to improvements of CLAIMS 4. Affidavits of support take more production time and INS is looking to revise the document to better capture its intended purpose.

