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NEWS RELEASE

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Expansion Planned for Legal Orientation Program For Aliens in Removal Proceedings

'Pro Bono Program' Name Changed to 'Legal Access Program'

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – Planning is underway to double the number of locations providing legal orientation programs to individuals in immigration court proceedings, the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) announced today.

The agency's Legal Orientation Program (LOP) was established in 2003 and now operates at six immigration detention facilities in Eloy, Ariz.; Port Isabel, Texas; El Paso, Texas; Tacoma, Wash.; Lancaster, Calif.; and Aurora, Colo. The program provides group presentations to detained individuals, explaining their legal rights and options in the immigration court system. In 2005, the program, which was funded by \$1 million in appropriated funds, reached more than 20,000 individuals – nearly 25 percent of detained aliens in immigration proceedings.

In the current FY 2006 budget year, funding for the program increased to \$2 million, permitting planning to increase the number of locations from six to 12. The agency expects to identify new locations within 6 months and anticipates the new sites will be operating in about 1 year.

The LOP has proven effective in improving the efficiency of immigration proceedings by providing early and accurate self-help legal information and materials to detained aliens, and referring them to *pro bono* attorneys, where appropriate, to provide free legal representation to individuals without the means to pay.

At the same time, the agency announced that it has renamed the previous *Pro Bono* Program to the Legal Access Program to reflect the expansion of the services it provides to individuals involved in removal proceedings in the immigration court system. The Legal Access Program includes the LOP; the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) *Pro Bono* Project, which recruits *pro bono* legal assistance for immigration detainees in presenting their cases before the BIA; the Model Hearing Program, which provides immigration court training to small groups of attorneys and law students; and the Unaccompanied Alien Children initiative, which coordinates with agencies to identify and resolve issues involving children in removal proceedings.

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Additional information on EOIR's Legal Assistance Program is available in a fact sheet on EOIR's website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.

– EOIR –

EOIR is responsible for adjudicating immigration cases. Specifically, under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR interprets and administers federal immigration laws by conducting immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. EOIR consists of three components: the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge, which is responsible for managing the numerous immigration courts located throughout the United States where immigration judges adjudicate individual cases; the Board of Immigration Appeals, which primarily conducts appellate reviews of immigration judge decisions; and the Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer, which adjudicates immigration-related employment cases. EOIR is committed to providing fair, expeditious, and uniform application of the nation's immigration laws in all cases.

Information about EOIR immigration proceedings is available on EOIR's website <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/press/subject.htm>.