



Dear USCIS Colleagues:

Family needs compel me very reluctantly to end my federal service, and I plan to work through November 17, 2006. That will give me time to finish some efforts in the works (though of course there always are more) and to celebrate long term successes with the leadership team at the upcoming USCIS managers' conference. But my wife and three children are eager to have me back.

My 28 months in government—commuting each week from my home in Chattanooga, Tennessee—will have been a completely unpredictable combination of challenges and rewards. In one sense, I was "made" for this job as Chief Counsel of the world's largest immigration services agency, and I have absolutely loved it. The chance also to have been Acting Director and Acting Deputy for a year, managing 15,000 people with a \$2 billion budget, has made this an unfathomable unexpected experience. I am filled with gratitude for it.

Balancing national security, institutional integrity and customer service has been a preeminent challenge for me in all the roles I have had. Struggling to make practical sense of labyrinthine statutes in the company of great minds has stretched my legal abilities. Swearing in soldiers and other citizens on Ellis Island, in the embassy in Rome, on a minor league baseball diamond in Memphis, and on an aircraft carrier in San Diego has enriched my heart. Re-kindling and re-focusing efforts for the transformation and digitization of this complex set of processes has awakened the businessman within me. Finding "sweet spot" methods to meaningfully improve security and process integrity while improving customer service has been truly gratifying.

Becoming a customer again will be a new psychological challenge, completing a wild ride among levels of authority at USCIS. It will be hard to watch the agency from the outside. But I am confident that an increasingly strong team is in place at USCIS, and in one sense it will be a treat to experience the many institutional improvements already underway and slated for the future.

I am grateful to have worked under two separate teams of DHS and USCIS leadership with great and different strengths. They have provided smart and steady leadership from roles of heavy responsibility. And I am grateful for the sessions I've had in the field with remarkably dedicated adjudicators and supervisors all over the agency, getting their great ideas about how to make things clearer and smarter. My family and I will pray for the continued wisdom and success of the good people of USCIS.

I am not proud of departing, but I do know that I have done the very best I could in the roles and time I have had. I intend to sprint to the finish line in November. Thank you for letting me serve with you.

God bless you,  
Robert C. Divine  
USCIS Chief Counsel