



November 28, 2006

# Public Notice

## **USCIS Announces Temporary Suspension of Premium Processing Service for Religious Workers (R-1) Nonimmigrant Visa Classification**

In August 2005, U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Office of Fraud Detection and National Security completed a Benefit Fraud Assessment (BFA) for religious worker petitions. The BFA revealed significant issues and potential vulnerabilities. As a result of this assessment and to ensure the integrity of the religious worker program, additional adjudication procedures are necessary.

Premium Processing Service guarantees that within 15 calendar days of receipt of a petition, USCIS will issue either an approval notice, a notice of intent to deny, a request for evidence or open an investigation for fraud or misrepresentation. Due to the complexities of the USCIS adjudication processes at this time, the Agency can not reasonably ensure this level of processing service for the R-1 petitions within 15 calendar days. Therefore, USCIS is temporarily suspending Premium Processing Service for Aliens in a Religious Occupation which is filed on Form I-129, along with the Q-1 and R-1 Classifications Supplement.

This suspension will last six months beginning on November 28, 2006. During this timeframe, USCIS will determine whether it is able to process these cases within 15 calendar days of receipt. If so, Form I-129 requesting R-1 nonimmigrant visa classification once again will be available for Premium Processing Service. Otherwise, USCIS may prescribe additional conditions of availability on Premium Processing Service for religious worker petitions, or may publish a Federal Register Notice permanently removing the R-1 nonimmigrant visa classification from eligibility for Premium Processing Service.

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