



# U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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Testimony

of

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For

A Hearing on

**Oversight of U.S. Citizenship and  
Immigration Services**

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Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Sessions, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to testify about the state of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and to discuss several critical issues important to this Committee.

I am deeply grateful to the Members of this Committee for your continued strong interest in USCIS and your support of its programs. I have appreciated the opportunity to meet with several of you personally since my arrival this past August and to provide responses to letters received from you.

Since joining USCIS, I have witnessed first-hand not only the challenges in managing an effective and efficient immigration services organization, but also the tremendous promise of our mission and the dedication of thousands of employees who administer our nation's immigration laws each day. I fully appreciate that our ability to manage or overcome our challenges and take full advantage of our potential requires close relationships with our partners, including Congress and this Committee in particular.

This morning, I would like to provide you with an overview of key initiatives and accomplishments we at USCIS have undertaken as well as an overview of our current financial condition. Each of the actions we are undertaking relates to our guiding principles of integrity, efficiency, consistency, and transparency. I am a naturalized U.S. citizen whose family came to this country as a result of the communist takeover of Cuba. It is of great personal importance to me that USCIS embodies these principles to become a more effective steward of the resources we receive from the communities we serve, and from Congress. As a former United States Attorney, it is also my priority that USCIS serves as a fair and efficient administrator of our nation's immigration laws.

### **Operational Excellence in Our Response to the Earthquake in Haiti**

Before discussing the details of our current operational activities, I want to first speak briefly about USCIS's response to the tragic January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The response of our government to the Haitian crisis was swift, decisive, and comprehensive.

Our employees worked long hours, including through weekends, holidays, and the snow storms, to implement Secretary Napolitano's January 18, 2010 announcement of humanitarian parole for certain Haitian orphans in order to allow the orphans to be united with their adoptive families and to receive the care they need. I am proud to report that USCIS has provided travel authorization to 1,089 orphans who qualified for humanitarian parole. USCIS continues to review approximately 350 other cases that are still pending final decision and to provide follow-up information to the families whose children are already here on how to finalize the children's immigration status.

This collective spirit and drive in response to the crisis are perhaps best exemplified by the actions and sacrifice of the USCIS Field Office Director on the ground at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Mr. Pius Bannis. Mr. Bannis worked all hours, providing

food and shelter to children without regard to his own needs, while evaluating and processing travel papers amidst the sweep of crowds that were desperate and scared.

In addition, USCIS employees worked tirelessly here in Washington, DC and throughout the country to build the significant operation necessary for us to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to eligible Haitian nationals in this country. USCIS has received approximately 49,200 application packages for Haitian TPS and accepted approximately 43,600 of these packages for further action. I can provide you and your offices with additional data about the progress of the TPS program should you so desire.

### **Operational and Financial Priorities**

While we are proud of the ability of USCIS to respond admirably and effectively during a time of great crisis, this response has helped us identify additional areas in which management improvements are needed. To a broader extent, I have been working every day with my leadership team to identify areas in which focus is needed across the USCIS operational enterprise. Specifically, I have asked my leadership team to emphasize the need to align our operations with a focus upon the priority principles of transparency, integrity, consistency, and efficiency. These priority principles are now steering our efforts to improve operations and outcomes and help us determine our resource needs. Doing so is particularly important in this currently difficult financial environment.

When I appeared before you in my confirmation hearing, I represented to you that I would conduct a top-to-bottom review of USCIS. After careful study since I took office, in January I realigned our organizational structure to reflect our priorities and to better achieve our goals. As a former United States Attorney, I believe it is imperative that USCIS help safeguard our national security and protect the integrity of our immigration system. As part of the realignment I created a new Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) focused on detecting, combating, and deterring threats to our public safety and fraud in our system. Previously, these functions resided in an office with a wide array of responsibilities. The creation of a separate Directorate that is focused on this critical mission set has elevated the profile of this work within USCIS and already has brought about operational improvements. The elevation of FDNS also emphasizes my commitment to anti-fraud efforts with ICE and other law enforcement partners.

FDNS reports directly to me. We are implementing policies to address fraud in visa and other benefit programs to ensure these programs are not exploited by the undeserving. We are re-tooling our benefit fraud and compliance assessment process to improve its methods, bring added expertise to bear, and enable us to broaden our reliance upon these methods to define operational improvements and the implementation of additional safeguards.

In order to enhance fraud detection and deterrence capabilities, USCIS implemented an Administrative Site Visit and Verification Program (ASVVP) in July 2009. Earlier USCIS fraud studies demonstrated the value of site inspections in detecting and deterring fraud. The ASVVP seeks to augment USCIS nationwide anti-fraud efforts and strengthen the integrity of the United States legal immigration system. This is

accomplished through the use of site inspections aimed at verifying key eligibility requirements such as the existence of the petitioning organization, compatibility of the worker's education and skills with the job offered and the ability or willingness of the petitioning organization to pay the appropriate wage. We are currently conducting site inspections on nonimmigrant and immigrant religious worker and H-1B nonimmigrant employment-based petitions. To date, more than 15,000 site inspections have been performed.

In the fall of 2009, FDNS and USCIS marked a significant accomplishment in our partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to eliminate the backlog of responses in the FBI National Name Check Program. Measured against the goal of having responses from the FBI on 98 percent of requests within 90 days and the remaining 2 percent within 180 days, USCIS now receives responses on all cases within 30 days. We view this achievement as a significant step taken toward attaining greater consistency and efficiency in our processes.

We have emphasized transparency through implementation of a robust and improved stakeholder engagement program. Our Office of Public Engagement, which I established this past September, is working to ensure our external partners are included in the consideration of policy and process development, and we are institutionalizing a mechanism to keep customers fully informed of USCIS issues and activities. The Office has already held numerous collaboration sessions with the immigration stakeholder community on a wide variety of topics such as the redesign of the Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions form, the development of a new fee waiver form, enhancing our Request for Evidence (RFE) process, Haitian TPS, and issues affecting vulnerable populations. On Haitian TPS alone, the Office has coordinated more than 180 engagements reaching more than 18,000 individuals.

In another facet of the USCIS realignment, I created the Customer Service Directorate to improve the way in which USCIS provides information and services to the public. One focus of this Directorate is to benchmark the delivery of USCIS service offerings against private industry and other federal agency best practices and incorporate these practices as appropriate.

Contained within the Directorate, the USCIS National Customer Service Center provides information to more than 16 million callers each year. Our Customer Assistance Office receives more than 800 pieces of correspondence each month. Late last year we implemented within only 90 days – at the President's direction – a vastly improved website to improve the ability of USCIS customers to access the information and assistance they need. The redesigned USCIS.gov website – which has a parallel website for Spanish-speaking customers – is more customer-centric, providing a “one-stop shop” for immigration services and information. We receive more than 2 million case status inquiries each quarter via the site. Customers are now able to receive real-time information regarding their case status, obtain office-specific processing times and opt to receive a text message when their status changes. Language is clearer, customer service tools are more accessible, and navigation through the website is simplified.

In addition, the Customer Service Directorate has implemented and continues to provide enhancements to My Case Status Online, which provides customers with direct access to case status information. Future improvements include the review of our current routing strategies to ensure that customers who contact the National Customer Service Center speak with the appropriate individuals within USCIS to resolve their inquiries. We are also planning to implement additional self-service tools via the web, which, for some inquiry types, will allow USCIS customers to correspond with us electronically without calling the National Customer Service Center or visiting a local office.

This week, USCIS issued a re-designed Permanent Resident Card (Green Card), which modernizes the Green Card with the most sophisticated security technology available to us today. The previous Permanent Resident Card was designed and placed into service in 1998, and only minor changes had been made to the card since that time. This new card includes additional security features, including embedded data and holographs, which make it more difficult to produce fraudulent cards and easier for DHS to identify fraud.

With respect to efficiency, and consistent with Secretary Napolitano's Department-wide Efficiency Review, USCIS has implemented several cost-cutting measures. We have developed several commonsense plans to reduce non-mission critical travel, subscriptions and printing; maximizing the use of government space for meetings; and improving utilization of refurbished information technology. USCIS has also issued a reduction in centrally located training that will help reduce associated travel costs.

USCIS has also undertaken a Balanced Workforce Strategy, also consistent with a Department-wide initiative, to help USCIS reduce workforce-related costs over time. We have begun the process of validating the conversion of numerous contract positions to federal staff. Such measures are necessary as a matter of efficiency and responsible stewardship. Our stewardship of public resources is particularly important given the funding challenges currently facing USCIS.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 USCIS experienced a marked decline in revenue. Revenue declined 15 percent -- a drop of approximately \$345 million -- from the estimate in the fiscal year 2007 fee rule. While revenue appears to have stabilized, we have not seen a material increase in total filing volumes for fiscal year 2010.

When I learned of our budget shortfall shortly after my arrival, I immediately called for an exhaustive and vigorous review of the USCIS Annual Operating Plan (AOP) to identify budget cuts that could be undertaken. The review remains underway and already we have identified savings exceeding \$160 million. Regrettably, these cuts may impact programs we expected would produce greater system efficiencies, including some identified in our 2007 fee rule. Additionally, USCIS undertook a comprehensive fee study to assess whether immigration fees were set at an appropriate level to fully recover the costs associated with providing benefits and services. The results of this study along with our review of the AOP are included in a proposed fee rule currently under review.

We are grateful for the \$224 million appropriation we received from Congress in FY 2010, including the significant new funding to expand and improve E-Verify and build upon our important collective work to successfully integrate immigrants into our

communities. Congress also appropriated funding toward addressing cross-subsidization of fees, charging higher fees for some applicants to cover the costs of other programs. In FY 2010, Congress provided resources for our military naturalizations, asylum, and refugee programs. The costs of these programs had previously been applied as surcharges on the fees of applicants for other immigration benefits. The FY 2011 budget request seeks a \$207 million appropriation that would eliminate this surcharge entirely. As mentioned, USCIS is working to publish a rule on this issue during the fourth quarter of this year. In addition to the results of the fee study this rule reflects the elimination of the asylum and refugee surcharge from application and petition fees.

The Chief Financial Officer's Act of 1990 requires us to undertake a fee study on a biannual basis. The USCIS financial condition also compels us to examine every option available to address our financial state, including potential changes to the amounts we charge for our services. In reviewing these options, we understand that the communities we serve include individuals who are not of significant financial means. This concern is made more acute by the magnitude of the fee increase two and a half years ago. We are making every effort to account for these concerns within the parameters of our difficult financial circumstances. I look forward to further discussion of the results of the fee study once it is published later this year.

While we make these difficult budget cuts and carefully measure the results of the fee study, we are undertaking quality improvements in the administration of the immigration system. Processing times for application and petition workload continue to be one important indicator of performance and we are proud of the reduction in processing times we have achieved thus far. With few exceptions, processing times currently are equal or better than the standards set in our 2007 fee rule.

From the first month of the fee increase in August 2007 through the end of the fiscal year in September 2009, the average cycle time for all form types decreased approximately 24 percent. These reduced processing times were made possible primarily by the increase in staffing afforded by the 2007 fee increase. Some of the most significant reductions include the following:

- Reduction of the cycle time for the Form N-400, application for naturalization, from 10.6 months to 4.1 months, which is below the projected goal of 5 months. In addition, the military N-400 cycle time was reduced to 3.5 months, also below projections;
- Reduction of the processing time for the Form I-485, application to register permanent resident or adjust status, from 10.8 months to 4.4 months (with a anticipated further reduction to 4 months);
- Reduction of the processing cycle time of the Form I-90, application to replace permanent resident card, from 3.4 months to 2.5 months; and,
- Reduction of the processing cycle time of the Form I-140, immigrant petition for alien worker, from 5.7 months to 3 months.

A comparison of the USCIS regions and service centers also reveals that we have achieved consistent cycle times across form types; indeed, for offices that adjudicate similar cases, the cycle times for most form types are now within days of each other.

Even in the face of the challenges noted, we have made vast improvements in both customer service and reduced processing times and in many of our other programs. I would like to highlight our recent policy outreach initiative, the efforts of our E-Verify Program, the developments in our EB-5 program, the successes in Refugee Processing and Military Naturalizations, the Citizenship Integration Grant program, and the next steps of the USCIS Transformation program.

### **USCIS Policy Review**

The uniform application and interpretation of policies across USCIS is crucial to our mission of providing the public with the highest possible level of service. To enhance consistency and integrity, we are undertaking a complete, *de novo* review of all policy and operational guidance in effect across USCIS. This initiative will enable USCIS to ensure the consistent application of policies across all our domestic and international offices. I am pleased to note that this policy review also includes two online surveys requesting feedback from our employees and external stakeholders, including Congressional staff, on prioritizing the policies being reviewed.

In the two weeks it was available, USCIS received a total of 5,675 responses to the public USCIS Policy Review Survey. 108 of these responses were from the Spanish-language survey USCIS posted on its Spanish site. Internally, 2,365 participated in the USCIS Internal Policy Review Survey. This was a USCIS record for employee participation in any survey. We will continue to examine our policies and operations to ensure consistency becomes a hallmark of our operations, including the adjudication process.

### **E-Verify**

E-Verify is a critical program that enables USCIS and more broadly, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to encourage and assist employers in complying with our immigration laws. E-Verify is a free, easy-to-use web-based system—operated by USCIS with the support of the Social Security Administration—that allows participating employers to electronically verify the employment eligibility of newly hired employees. We are doing everything we can not only to optimize performance of the system but also to ensure its integrity and accuracy, improve ease of use, and expand customer services. I am committed to building on the success of this program, which continues to enroll approximately 1,400 new employers per week in addition to the more than 200,000 employers already enrolled, covering more than 740,000 worksites.

During a recent study of data from a three-month period in 2008, the Westat Corporation found that E-Verify's accuracy continues to improve. In this evaluation, Westat found that in approximately 96 percent of the cases, the E-Verify findings were consistent with the workers' true employment authorization status. Further, the study found that of the total cases submitted to E-Verify, 6.2 percent of the workers were actually unauthorized and, of that subset, E-Verify correctly detected approximately half as unauthorized. The remainder went

undetected by E-Verify, primarily as a result of identity fraud. The study concluded that this rate is not surprising in light of E-Verify's current limited ability to detect identity fraud.

We are working hard to improve E-Verify's ability to detect identity fraud. USCIS has already added DHS-issued photos to the system, allowing for a biometric comparison for authorized workers and we are in the process of adding passport photos to E-Verify's Photo Tool. We have also significantly enhanced our capabilities to monitor system use for evidence of identity fraud. However, even with these steps it is important to understand the limitations placed on the current system. The largest pool of available biometrics is state driver's license photos. Access to these photos would improve E-Verify's ability to effectively combat identity fraud. However, even with this limitation we are also examining other biometric and biographic options to further strengthen verification of employees and to reduce misuse, fraud, identity theft and abuse.

It is important to note that E-Verify is but one tool USCIS and the Department employ to ensure a lawful workforce. USCIS is working this year and in FY 2011 to implement a series of improvements consistent with the \$30 million in two-year funding that Congress provided in the FY 2010 appropriations bill. E-Verify system algorithms are being improved for better data matching in order to continue to reduce inaccurate initial results. USCIS is also developing Self-Check functionality within E-Verify to help employees proactively identify and resolve data issues outside of the hiring process that could help prevent data mismatches with the E-Verify system.

#### **EB-5**

The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program administered by USCIS seeks to stimulate employment creation in the United States through promotion of foreign national capital investment into the U.S. economy. In recent years, the EB-5 program has achieved increased success in enhancing the numbers of participants as well as improving our processing times. The EB-5 program may be utilized for the purpose of creating either new commercial enterprises or to assist existing troubled U.S. businesses.

Currently, each foreign investor who participates in the EB-5 program must invest either \$1,000,000 or \$500,000 in targeted employment areas into a U.S. enterprise. Such investment must create at least 10 full-time jobs for U.S. citizens or immigrants lawfully authorized to be employed in the United States.

Under a pilot immigration program first enacted in 1992 and regularly reauthorized since then, certain EB-5 visas are also set aside for investors in Regional Centers designated by USCIS based on proposals for promoting economic growth. Regional Center Pilot Program investors may establish eligibility by showing indirect rather than direct creation of the necessary jobs. Once a Regional Center is approved, the individual investor still files the necessary petition, but the process is simplified because the business and investment plans have already been reviewed. The program is an increasing success with 84 currently approved and active Regional Centers in 31 different U.S. jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia and Guam.



In addition to the increased number of Regional Centers, USCIS has also seen significant improvement in its processing times of EB-5 petitions. The current cycle time for Regional Center Proposal Adjudication has been reduced from 14 months to 4 months in FY 2008. The current cycle time for I-526s (Petition as an Alien Investor) is now less than five months down from 7.5 months in FY 2008.

USCIS has also expanded its efforts to make our EB-5 process more transparent and open to our stakeholders and those seeking to do business with us. USCIS has held quarterly meetings with EB-5 external stakeholders in FY 2009 and during the first quarter of 2010. In addition, USCIS is pursuing liaison activities with the Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration (Invest in America) to determine how to promote and further streamline the adjudication process of the EB-5 program.

As an example of this transparency and streamlining, USCIS recently published a memorandum regarding the EB-5 Program that addresses a wide variety of issues, providing a transparent set of expectations and clarity to USCIS adjudicators as well as to stakeholders and investors. Frequently asked questions regarding EB-5 are now being developed that will be posted on the USCIS website. We have also revised and published updated program information on the EB-5 portion of the USCIS website.

Furthermore, USCIS has drafted a new form for Regional Center proposals and amendments including a fee study. The new Form I-924 will standardize the adjudication of Regional Center proposals and provide clear processing instructions to the public.

I am also pleased to note that, as the below table indicates, the EB-5 visa issuance increased exponentially in FY 2009, which reflects the current success of the program.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Total EB-5 Visas issued</b>
FY 2009	4,218
FY 2008	1,360
FY 2007	806
FY 2006	744

### **Military Naturalizations**

I am also pleased to update you on the continued success of our Military Naturalization program. USCIS recognizes the important sacrifices made by non-U.S. citizen members of our armed forces and their families. We are committed to processing their naturalization applications in a timely and efficient manner, providing exemplary customer service, and fulfilling our mission with integrity.

Since 2008, USCIS domestic field offices have conducted over 11,000 outreach activities on military installations to help members of the armed forces and their families. These activities include conducting "Immigration 101" seminars, on-site interviews and collection of biometrics, and naturalization oath ceremonies. USCIS has naturalized more than 58,300 service men and women since September 2001, both stateside and in

overseas locations including Iraq and Afghanistan. In FY 2009, USCIS naturalized more than 10,500 service members, 8,850 in the United States and 1,655 overseas.

In August 2009, USCIS and the United States Army launched the *Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative*, a program that gives non-citizen enlistees an opportunity to naturalize immediately preceding the completion of basic training. This unique initiative benefits both the Department of Defense and USCIS by affording service members the earliest possible opportunity to become U.S. citizens. As a result, military families are in a better position to pursue available immigration benefits, which promotes family unity and military readiness. USCIS is reaching out to all other service branches to expand this initiative by the end of this year.

### **Refugee Processing Activities Abroad**

In addition to our work to respond to the crisis in Haiti, USCIS, as the principal DHS component in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), is committed to fulfilling its humanitarian mission to provide resettlement opportunities to qualified refugees around the globe while ensuring the integrity of the program and our national security.

In FY 2009, through close collaboration with the Department of State and other USRAP partners, USCIS devoted the resources necessary to meet the President's allocated admissions level of 75,000 so that the United States admitted 74,652 refugees, the highest level of refugee admissions in a decade. To achieve this, USCIS nearly doubled its Refugee Corps staff and deployed USCIS officers to 79 countries to interview more than 110,000 refugee applicants from 64 nations. In addition, while striving to accomplish its refugee processing goals, USCIS worked tirelessly to support our national security mission through the development of enhanced security protocols, a quality assurance program, anti-fraud measures and transparent refugee program policies and procedures. By adopting a strong, unequivocal position on fraud and national security, we have been able to ensure that precious resettlement opportunities remain available to those truly in need.

While the refugee program is always subject to unexpected events such as volatile security situations, disease outbreaks, and host country processing limitations, the success of the program in FY 2009 established a strong foundation for processing activities this fiscal year. In the first half of FY 2010, USCIS interviewed nearly 50,000 refugee applicants, supporting the admission of 35,831 refugees -- an increase in admissions of 20 percent as compared to the same time last year. USCIS is committed to devoting the resources necessary to ensure the success and integrity of the program in the years to come.

### **Citizenship and Integration Grant Program**

Improvement of services to customers also includes the recent announcement of the FY 2010 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. This program, led by the USCIS Office of Citizenship, provides two competitive grant opportunities designed to help prepare lawful permanent residents (LPRs) for citizenship. The funding will expand existing programs, build new capacity to prepare immigrants on the path to citizenship, and help them gain the

knowledge necessary to become successful citizens. USCIS will also continue to fund integration tools to enhance English language learning, expand the capacity of volunteers to prepare immigrants for citizenship, improve access to information on citizenship education opportunities and resources, and fund a citizenship-focused public awareness effort.

I expect that through our efforts in FY 2009, those being planned for this year, and those continuing in FY 2011; we will be well-positioned to support organizations providing resources to underserved immigrant communities to achieve better integration of immigrants into our nation. In FY 2009, we awarded 13 separate grants totaling \$1.2 million. In FY 2010, I expect USCIS to award upwards of 50 separate grants totaling an estimated \$7 million. We have developed a rigorous grant review and evaluation process to ensure this important investment will benefit not only those directly receiving services, but the nation as a whole.

### **Transformation**

Finally, no project is more important to near-and long-term operational improvement and efficiency than our Transformation initiative, a USCIS-wide effort to modernize the way we do our work each and every day. This Committee has heard about USCIS Transformation for the last several years with very few visible results to date. I share the disappointment of those who would expect to see this effort further along. I am pleased to note, however, that our Transformation program is proceeding on a carefully developed path that is mindful of the challenges that lay ahead and is focused on avoiding the customary mistakes that typically afflict large transformational projects.

For much of the last year of the Transformation program, USCIS and its key contractor have focused on the critical project management and enterprise architecture planning efforts that are necessary for long-term program success. That planning resulted in a significant shift in the Transformation program's deployment strategy among immigration benefit types. Specifically, we are re-sequencing the schedule to focus efforts first on non-immigrant benefit types, resulting in a process that follows the natural immigration lifecycle and will enable the earlier use of electronic adjudications. This will strengthen the impact of the first deployment and immediately show a clear tie to mission results.

Our operating plan for FY 2010 budgeted more than \$322 million for the Transformation program and related activities. We are still working to finalize a revised program plan for FY 2011. The budget request provides \$164 million in estimated new premium processing fee revenue for Transformation in FY 2011.

Several of the challenges in our Transformation program have been documented by our federal partners in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG). We have worked closely with these offices to address their recommendations and are continuing to seek their assistance through an ongoing collaborative partnership.

The most recent feedback from the OIG in late November 2009 requested that USCIS update its strategic approach to communicate the end-state business processes and technology solutions to stakeholders, to include development and implementation of

plans to ensure sufficient and consistent stakeholder participation in the reengineering of the USCIS process.

USCIS has updated its outreach plan to reflect the newly defined Transformation efforts for this next stage of our process. Our efforts include aggressive implementation strategies to prepare internal and external stakeholders for change, enlist stakeholders in solution development, and integrate the "stakeholder voice" into the Transformation efforts. USCIS has also developed a series of key action items designed to inform internal and external stakeholders at strategic intervals to maintain consistent awareness and interest. This engagement began earlier this month and will continue as we develop the next phases of this program.

The Transformation program, while on a better path, will require continuous and intense management review, especially during these next development stages, to ensure optimal functionality will be delivered on time and within budget. Transformation cannot, and will not, proceed without input and significant participation from our employees, our customers, and our other stakeholders, including Congress.

### **Challenges and Path Forward**

USCIS has made significant improvements in protecting our national security and combating fraud, customer service, fiscal responsibility, reduced processing times, and engagement with the public we serve. At the same time, USCIS continues to face significant challenges that we are working to overcome. There is a great deal to do but there is a great deal we can do. I am committed to maintaining a strong focus on improving our performance in all program areas, even in the face of fiscal challenges. We must be even more efficient out of respect for the customers who pay fees and the taxpayers who support our operations, and we must enhance the customer service we provide. USCIS activities must become more transparent than they have been, and we need to continue to work closely with our stakeholders and the public at large to collaborate on the outcomes we collectively want and need to achieve.

On behalf of USCIS, I greatly appreciate your support of our efforts. I look forward to working with you on these and other matters critical to our immigration system and the work of USCIS. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.