

# Texas Service Center Congressional Unit

January 20, 2016

# Working With Congress

- ▶ The Congressional Unit serves as the primary point of coordination for TSC to Congress regarding USCIS operations.
- ▶ The Congressional Unit conducts and manages responses to all congressional casework inquiries at TSC.
- ▶ The Congressional Unit consists of:
  - Center Congressional Lead;
  - Supervisory Immigration Services Officer;
  - Full-time Congressional Liaisons and Congressional Assistants

# A Year in the Life of the TSC Congressional Unit

- ▶ Telephone Inquiries
  - 9,710
- ▶ Email Inquiries
  - 12,638
- ▶ Written and/or Fax Inquiries
  - 43
- ▶ Other Inquiries – NVC, HQOLA, USCIS offices, and others
  - 832

# Contacting TSC

## ▶ Subject Matter

- Employment Authorization/Travel Documents
- Humanitarian Affairs
- Permanent Residence
- Employment-Based Immigration
- Immigrant Visas

## ▶ Form Types:

- I-102, I-129F, I-130, I-131, I-140 (I-907), I-485 (Employment and Asylum) I-730, I-765, I-817, I-821(D), I-824, and N-565

# Inquiries: Helpful Tips

- ▶ **Email**: Great for simple and/or multiple status checks and requests regarding USCIS operations and procedures.
- ▶ **Telephone**: Best when dialogue is required or an emergency exists that requires immediate attention.
- ▶ **Written**: Recommended for complex cases and when USCIS will need to review documents. Should be limited in number as they take longer to resolve.

# Inquiries: Helpful Tips

(continued)

- ▶ Do not submit inquiries in multiple formats. For example, submitting the same inquiry via email more than once in a 30-day period and/or submitting the same inquiry via telephone.
- ▶ Should you need to speak with a Congressional Liaison prior to receiving a meaningful response to your inquiry, be sure to inform the liaison that you submitted a previous inquiry. This helps to eliminate duplicate inquiries.
- ▶ If you submit a verbal inquiry via telephone, you will receive a verbal response. If you would like to receive a written response, please submit your inquiry in writing, either by email or as formal written correspondence.

# Inquiries: Helpful Tips

(continued)

- ▶ If you have multiple inquiries, please submit them via email.
- ▶ Urgent requests should be made telephonically.
- ▶ Please call for assistance when the constituent is no longer in your office. Further, please note that contact information for USCIS Congressional Units is not intended to be shared with constituents.
- ▶ When leaving a voicemail, please provide the following:
  - the Member's name, as well as your name and telephone number
  - the constituent's full name with spelling of the name;
  - the constituent's A-File number, receipt number or date of birth;
  - assurances that you have been contacted personally by the individual (not by a spouse, relative, an employer, an attorney or other third party); and
  - assurances that the constituent has requested that the congressional office assist them in resolving his or her case.

# Telephone Inquiries

- ▶ The Congressional Unit response goals require that telephone inquiries receive an **initial response by the close of the next business day.**
- ▶ If the inquiry cannot be resolved within this time, we will strive to resolve or at least provide a **meaningful response on all pending inquiries within 30 calendar days of receipt.**

# Email Inquiries

- ▶ Email inquiries must be acknowledged within five (5) business days of receipt and shall be resolved **within 30 calendar days of receipt.**
  - The automated response from the mailbox serves as acknowledgment that your inquiry was received.
- ▶ If we cannot resolve or provide a **meaningful response** on all pending inquiries **within 30 calendar days of receipt**, an interim response will be provided.

# Formal Written and Faxed Inquiries

- ▶ Formal written correspondence and faxes shall be resolved or initially acknowledged **within 30 calendar days of receipt.**
- ▶ If only an acknowledgement can be given in the first 30 calendar days, we will strive to provide a **meaningful response** detailing next steps and a plan for resolution.

# Privacy Release Requirements

- ▶ Numerous laws, regulations, and policies limit the disclosure of information contained in alien files and USCIS data systems. In light of the various legal and policy considerations governing the release of case-specific information, USCIS prefers receiving a privacy release for all form types.
- ▶ Inquiries requesting general information or non-case specific information do not require a privacy release.
- ▶ Family members, friends, and attorneys or authorized representatives (even if there is a G-28 on file) or other interested parties may not authorize the release of information on behalf of the person who is the subject of the record.

# Privacy Release Requirements

(Continued)

- ▶ Congressional staff are advised to provide a privacy release for all case specific inquiries.
- ▶ **Practically, privacy releases are in our collective best interest, helping to ensure and document that the person requesting information is who they say they are and that they have a right to the information.**
- ▶ **Note: Please do NOT include Social Security Numbers in the Privacy Release, nor in the body of the email.**

# Requests for Information on Immigrant Petitions

- ▶ Regarding Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, or a Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, the privacy release can come from **either** the petitioner or the beneficiary if the information is located in the beneficiary's A-file.
  - For example, if a Form I-140 petition was concurrently filed with a Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, and an A-file has been created; the beneficiary can provide the written release for the congressional office to request the status of the I-140 petition.
  - For a Form I-130 petition, the beneficiary can provide the release if the I-130 petition is in his or her A-file.

# Cases for Which a Written Release Is Always Required

- ▶ All cases involving asylum or refugee issues, including derivative matters (such as I-730 petitions). Applicants for asylum and refugee status are governed by the same confidentiality standards relating to asylum and refugee grantees.
- ▶ Per the regulations controlling the implementation of the laws relating to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) requests, a written release is always required for information pertaining to TPS cases and related applications.
- ▶ All petitions and applications relating to VAWA, Battered Spouse, Child or Parent Self Petition, and U and T visas.

# Format of the Privacy Release

- ▶ A sample privacy release document as part of the Immigration Casework Intake Sheet can be found at [www.uscis.gov/congress](http://www.uscis.gov/congress). However, one specific format is not obligatory. The release can be made in a letter or as part of a casework inquiry form. The privacy release does not have to be on the member's letterhead. At a minimum, the release must contain the following elements:
  - Name of the individual;
  - Name of the Member to whom the information can be released;
  - The topic to which the requested information relates (e.g., USCIS, immigration benefits, form number);
  - A statement authorizing the release of information;
  - Notarized or made under the penalty of perjury; and
  - The individual's signature.

# Expedited Processing

- ▶ USCIS cannot expedite an application or petition solely on the basis of an expedite request from a congressional office.
- ▶ Expedited processing may be considered in line with longstanding USCIS policy, for example:
  - Severe financial loss to a company or individual
  - Extreme emergent or humanitarian situation
  - Department of Defense or national interest situation
  - USCIS error or other compelling interest of USCIS
  - Nonprofit status of requesting organization in furtherance of the cultural and social interests of the United States
- ▶ **Note:** Expedited processing requests **MUST** be accompanied by evidence to support the request.



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Track your application or petition as it moves through the immigration process



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Locate your nearest field or international USCIS office



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Schedule a free appointment to visit a local USCIS office and get answers on your case

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# USCIS.gov Highlights

- ▶ My Case Status
- ▶ “Find-it-Fast” routing tool
- ▶ Processing Times
- ▶ Electronic Copies of all USCIS forms
- ▶ Headlines/News Tickers and News Update pages
- ▶ Topic Pages– Citizenship, Family, Working in the USA, etc.
- ▶ INFOPASS Appointment Setup
- ▶ USCIS Field Office Locator
- ▶ Email Update sign-up
- ▶ Spanish language parallel site



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### USCIS and Congress

USCIS is committed to providing Members of Congress and their staff with timely, accurate, and comprehensive information about our operations, policies and procedures. [The Office of Legislative Affairs \(OLA\)](#) is the primary office within USCIS that supports this important agency goal.

This site is intended to support the efforts of Congress exclusively by providing information on our programs and assistance with constituent casework. In addition, congressional staff can learn more about USCIS and the USCIS congressional program by [contacting us](#) or attending one of our [congressional events](#).

We are looking forward to working with you as we serve the public together.

Find this page at [www.uscis.gov/congress](http://www.uscis.gov/congress)

## News and Announcements

# Online Congressional Resources

- ▶ USCIS Resources for Congress  
<http://www.uscis.gov/congress>

- ▶ Features:

- About us
- Comprehensive Contact Directory
- Legislative Resources
- Congressional Activities and Collaboration
- Congressional Casework
- Links to Additional Government Department sites
- Testimony/Remarks