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By ESEC at 11:44 am, May 16, 2022

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave NW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Ur Mendoza Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Director Jaddou:

We write to encourage the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to consider innovative approaches to digitize USCIS-controlled immigration records, including entering into digitization partnership agreements. Specifically, we encourage collaboration with companies and organizations with long track records of success working with both federal and state partners, including the National Archives, to digitize genealogical records. Digitization of documents maintained under the USCIS Genealogical Program¹ through a digitization partnership will save agency resources, including time and money, enhance public access to these vital records, and will help preserve these documents for generations to come.

The records maintained under the USCIS Genealogical Program hold great importance not just to professional and personal genealogists seeking to understand and preserve family and community histories, but also to researchers and historians seeking to document the stories of our nation's development. Our constituents in Utah are uniquely passionate about preserving genealogical history as a source of both personal and national enrichment. Each individual record represents a piece of our shared national history and should be easily accessible to the public. We support programs that eliminate barriers to accessing these genealogical records, increase response times and help reduce Genealogical Program user fees without putting undue burden on taxpayers.

We therefore request that the Department and USCIS investigate options to broaden the availability of these records at a responsible cost to both researchers and taxpayers through digitization partnerships. Specifically, we request that the agency investigate both public and private partnerships that may provide digitization services at no cost to taxpayers. Notably, we believe such efforts would lower burdens to accessing this information and help DHS and USCIS comply with the directives outlined in President Biden's Executive Order 14058, *Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery To Rebuild Trust in Government*.

¹ E.g., Naturalization Certificate Files (C-Files), Alien Registration Forms (Form AR-2), Visa Files, Registry Files, and Alien-Files (A-files).

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service at the Department of Homeland Security. We look forward to working together to increase access to, and permanent preservation of, these critical records. For more information or any clarifying questions, please have a member of your staff contact Rebekah Rodriguez in Congressman Curtis's office at Rebekah.Rodriguez@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. Curtis", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

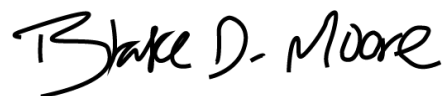
John R. Curtis
Member of Congress

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Michael S. Lee
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Stewart", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Stewart
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Blake D. Moore", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Blake Moore
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Burgess Owens", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Burgess Owens
Member of Congress



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

July 29, 2022

The Honorable John R. Curtis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Curtis:

Thank you for your May 13, 2022, letter to the Department of Homeland Security regarding approaches to digitize U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) controlled immigration records. As an initial matter, I want to apologize for the delay in responding to your letters. We have implemented new procedures to better ensure our responses to correspondence such as yours are timely. Secretary Mayorkas has asked that I respond on his behalf.

Regarding genealogy files, USCIS completed a major multi-year effort to transfer the contents of the Microfilm Digitization Application System (MiDAS) to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as required by the system's NARA-approved records schedule. MiDAS contains historic records documenting the arrival and naturalization of immigrants who arrived in the United States between 1893 and 1975. MiDAS converts index cards and records from deteriorating microfilm into digital images to improve retrieval of these historic records. As of March 9, 2022, 82.6 million files were sent to NARA. This is the largest transfer of immigration data to the National Archives in history. A Memorandum of Understanding will be established between USCIS and NARA to clearly articulate the division of responsibilities regarding MiDAS record provisions to the public.

Additionally, USCIS is prioritizing digitization needs to support efficient adjudication of benefits. USCIS continues to actively pursue solutions to digitize receipt files and immigration records, ultimately saving money, reducing the time it normally takes to locate and transfer a physical file for adjudication, and improving customer service.

USCIS wants to enhance the public's ability to access historic records and we are always looking for innovative ways to better serve the public. Please know that many of these historic records were transferred to NARA as described above.

The Honorable John R. Curtis
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Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director