



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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# News Release

## **USCIS ANNOUNCES BACKLOG ELIMINATION UPDATE**

*Progress Continues Towards Six-month Cycle Time*

Washington, DC – By completing more than 600,000 more cases than were received in the first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2004, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced today that the backlog has declined for the processing of immigration benefits such as work authorization, permanent residency, and naturalization. In the update issued to Congress, USCIS reported the backlog, which had reached a high of 3.8 million cases in January 2004, had been reduced to 3.2 million cases as of June 30, 2004.

“Each day, USCIS is getting closer to the ending our backlog of pending applications,” said USCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre. “Today’s announcement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our 15,000 employees. I’m confident that the momentum we’re building now will carry us to our goal of completely eliminating the backlog and maintaining a six-month or less cycle time by the end of 2006.”

The report credits much of the backlog elimination progress to productivity increases and process refinements. The USCIS process refinements include automating manual processes and clarifying requirements for when additional evidence might be needed in order to complete processing of a benefit application.

The report also previews expected progress in the fourth quarter, noting that in July USCIS distinguished those cases in the backlog as cases where a benefit would be immediately available upon approval of the application or petition. This will take pending *Petitions for Immigration Relative* (I-130) out of the backlog since, except for petitions filed for an immediate relative, such as a child, spouse or parent of a U.S. citizen, it can be many years after the initial filing of the Form I-130, before an immigrant visa actually becomes available to the person benefiting from the petition.

The report also noted a reduction in cycle times for a number of services and benefits. For example, the cycle time for the Replacement of a Green Card (Form I-90) is 6.3 months, as of August 2004. At the beginning of the fiscal year, the cycle time for this same service was 12.7 months. Most of the improvement can be attributed to use of updated technology to conduct automated database searches rather than on time-intensive manual searches.

- USCIS -

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing our nation's security.