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# Homeland Security



## DHS at 10: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:

*Throughout 2013, we are commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Department of Homeland Security. In recognition of this important milestone, leaders from across the Department and its component agencies will be discussing their beginnings, their present operations, and what's to come.*

I recently sat down to answer questions about the present and future of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in recognition of the Department of Homeland Security's tenth anniversary. For ten years, USCIS has been securing America's promise as a nation of immigrants and a beacon of hope and opportunity.

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### What is USCIS's mission, and how was this mission fulfilled prior to DHS?

On March 1, 2003, with the creation of DHS, USCIS officially assumed responsibility for the delivery of U.S. immigration services and benefits. We benefit from a [legacy](#) of more than 100 years of federal immigration and naturalization administration.

Since 2003, the agency has naturalized almost 700,000 individuals each year, helped unite families and provide shelter to those in need of humanitarian relief, and introduced people from all over the world who contribute to our rich and diverse cultural and economic landscape. At the same time, the agency has guarded the integrity of our immigration system and helped safeguard our nation's security.

### What have been some important milestones for USCIS?

In the past ten years, USCIS's workforce has enabled the agency to fulfill its core obligations while breaking new ground and achieving milestones. As USCIS enters its second decade, it has successfully implemented the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and instituted the provisional waiver program to alleviate the hardship that immigrant families suffer in separation. Additionally, USCIS has mobilized its workforce to reach out to individuals in underserved communities, bringing the immigration system's resources and opportunities to them. These people include victims of violence against women and the plight of human trafficking, among other crimes. USCIS has launched a campaign to educate vulnerable populations who could fall victim to immigration fraud schemes, while deterring the would-be wrongdoer and punishing the culpable. The agency launched E-Verify and its valuable Self-Check tool, and has overseen the program's growth as a key component of the government-wide effort to ensure a lawful workforce and workplace.

### How does USCIS operate today?

With offices in over 23 countries, USCIS uses its international footprint to expand its outreach to members of our nation's Armed Forces and to naturalize those members wherever they may be deployed. Through the creation of the Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate, USCIS has elevated and strengthened its profile as a critical stakeholder in the fight against terrorism and as guardian of the immigration system's integrity. Through increased language access and a redesigned website also available in Spanish, USCIS communicates more effectively to a broader array of people.

### What do you see as the future of USCIS?

The agency looks to the next ten years equipped with citizenship resources and guides for new Americans, a foundation of unprecedented transparency and engagement, and a new and expanding

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electronic filing system. USCIS is poised to reinvent itself as a leader of technological innovation in Government, carrying forward its proud service as administrator of our identity as a nation of immigrants and a beacon of hope and opportunity.

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