

OMBUDSMAN

QUARTERLY UPDATE

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Ombudsman Case Assistance Online

In September 2011, the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman’s Office) launched Ombudsman Online Case Assistance, a new initiative that provides for the direct, paperless submission of requests for assistance to the Ombudsman’s Office. Individuals or employers, and their counsel, seeking assistance may now [submit their case inquiries online using Ombudsman Online Case Assistance](#). The Ombudsman’s Office will still accept case assistance inquiries using [Form DHS-7001](#), which also may be submitted by email, mail or fax. Please review our [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) regarding the online system, if you have further questions or experience any problems.

As a reminder, the Ombudsman’s Office may be able to help if you have a problem with an application or petition pending before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Before contacting the Ombudsman’s Office for help, first try to resolve your problem by using the USCIS customer service options available to you:

- Call the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283
- Check [My Case Status](#) Online
- Make an [INFOPASS](#) Appointment with USCIS

Ombudsman First Annual Conference

On October 20, 2011, the Ombudsman’s Office hosted its First Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. This event brought together more than 300 participants with diverse backgrounds and interests to discuss the common goal of improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services. Participants included representatives from community and faith-based organizations, national immigration services networks, business and industry associations, law schools, and law firms, as well as officials from multiple government agencies including USCIS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as well as the Departments of Justice and State.

In her welcoming remarks, Ombudsman January Contreras shared a video of an immigration benefits applicant who was recently granted permanent residency by USCIS and movingly described her experience of how this country embraced her and her family. Ombudsman Contreras noted that there are millions of similar stories every year, where a person's first impression of our nation is based on his or her interaction with USCIS. Ombudsman Contreras said: "As the Administration works with Congress on larger issues requiring legislation, we need to remember that we can continue to raise the bar every day on how we do our jobs. . . It doesn't take legislation to ensure a fair process or a professional interview. Regardless of whether an application is denied or approved, we need to keep working to ensure that every person has an experience like the one we heard today." *Continued on Page 2.*



Ombudsman First Annual Conference continued....

Ombudsman Contreras recognized her staff for their passion and their commitment to the mission of the Ombudsman's Office. In addition, she thanked USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas and USCIS officials for contributing to the conference and for their work every day to increase engagement with the public and improve access to information and services.



Keynote remarks were delivered by Cecilia Muñoz, White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Ms. Muñoz thanked all participants for coming together to continue strengthening transparency and collaboration in immigration services. She noted the significance of the conference in a recent [White House Blog posting](#).

Issues covered during the conference included:

- Stakeholder perspectives on recent trends in employment-based adjudications;
- Current developments in particular social group definitions for asylum applicants;
- Challenges in the processing of waivers of inadmissibility filed both overseas and domestically;
- Efforts to improve immigration processing and Executive Office for Immigration Review docket efficiency through interagency coordination and communication;
- Impact of immigrant status verification services on access to public benefits, such as driver's licenses and social security;
- Interagency coordination and communication in managing the visa queues and setting cut-off dates in the Department of State Visa Bulletin, and nuts and bolts information on visa retrogression and retaining priority dates; and
- The role of bloggers in immigration services.

The Ombudsman's Office thanks those who served as speakers and attended the conference. Highlights from the keynote speakers and roundtable sessions are available on our website at www.dhs.gov/cisombudsman.

DHS Support for Women and Girls

The Ombudsman's Office first began focusing on remedies for immigrant victims of crime in 2009 with [formal recommendations](#) about some of the challenges and opportunities for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Beginning in 2010, the Ombudsman's Office has been able to help take these recommendations to the next step, working with other DHS components and non-governmental organizations to address the recommendations made.

One of the reasons that DHS has increasingly been collaborating internally and externally on these issues is because of the call to action that came from the White House Council on Women and Girls (Council). The Council was created in 2009 by President Obama's [Executive Order on the White House Council on Women and Girls](#). To support the priorities of the Council, DHS is dedicated to ensuring that DHS components consider the unique issues facing women and girls while working in the interest of the nation in all aspects of the homeland security mission. Specifically, one of the priorities announced with the Executive Order is combating violence against women.

As the DHS designee to the Council, Ombudsman January Contreras has recently hosted roundtable sessions in Los Angeles, California; Omaha, Nebraska; and Tucson, Arizona, where she shared advancements that DHS is working on to better combat violence against women and girls through the development of policies that address victims of crime, the administration of immigration remedies such as T and U visas, and new training for DHS personnel and state and local law

enforcement. In return, she heard feedback from community-based partners about the day to day challenges with the immigration system and a need for more consistent compliance at the local level with agency-wide policies and directives. DHS and the Council both appreciate the time and feedback that members of these communities have shared with the goal of continuing to increase consistent compliance with policies that support women and girls and victims of crimes.

Ombudsman Contreras recently addressed some of this work in Arizona in [this White House Blog Posting](#).

Ombudsman Email Outages

Over the past several weeks, the Ombudsman's Office experienced problems receiving messages sent to the email box CISOmbudsman@dhs.gov. We have resolved the problem. If you sent an e-mail to this address and did not receive a response, please re-send it. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Additionally, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Headquarters, which includes the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, experienced an incoming e-mail delivery outage from external sources to staff email addresses in mid-November. E-mail sent from outside DHS was not received. Senders did not receive an indication that their e-mail was not delivered and their e-mail cannot be recovered. If you sent an e-mail to our office during the outage period and did not receive a response, please re-send it. The issue has been resolved and e-mail is fully operational at this time.

Providing People with the Help they Need One Case at a Time

The Ombudsman provides individual assistance to members of the public who have not been able to resolve a problem with their USCIS application or petition. We are often asked in what kinds of situations our assistance is most effective. Below are three recent examples in which USCIS resolved problems in response to inquiries from the Ombudsman's Office.

Humanitarian Parole Granted to Patient's Mother

A young man from Mexico who immigrated to the United States as a child, with his family, sought the Ombudsman Office's help. The young man lived in the United States for most of his 20 years. He was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in 2006. He received treatment, but the cancer returned. Believing that he might die soon, the young man asked to see his mother one more time. However, the young man's mother had been deported from the United States, and her subsequent applications for a visa to visit her son had been denied. The young man's doctors and the hospital administrators who knew him wrote letters of support asking that the young man's mother be permitted to visit her dying son.

The patient and his health care advocates wrote to the Ombudsman's Office asking for help. The Ombudsman's Office contacted USCIS and shared the unique circumstances of his case, USCIS subsequently granted humanitarian parole to the mother for three months.

Expedited Visa Adjudication Granted to L visa Applicant

A nonimmigrant businesswoman from China with a pending petition for L intra-company transferee status contacted the Ombudsman's Office because she needed to travel abroad. She was reluctant to leave the United States because USCIS had not yet adjudicated the petition. The businesswoman was in charge of regional sales operations for a large U.S. company that required periodic meetings with principal managers working in various locations worldwide. The Ombudsman's Office notified USCIS of the urgency of her case, and USCIS approved the petition before her travel date.

Fiancé Petition Expedited after Ombudsman Assistance

A U.S. Citizen petitioner experiencing serious medical problems filed a petition for his foreign-born fiancée. The petitioner contacted the Ombudsman's Office after waiting three months past the normal processing time. The Ombudsman's Office contacted USCIS, and the agency expedited processing and the petition was approved.

TALK TO US

Citizenship and Immigration Services
Ombudsman

cisombudsman@dhs.gov

202-357-8100

www.dhs.gov/cisombudsman

*sign up on our website to receive
periodic email updates from the
Ombudsman

HOW THE OMBUDSMAN WORKS FOR YOU

The Ombudsman is here to help individuals and employers who need to resolve a problem with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The Ombudsman also makes recommendations to fix systemic problems and improve the quality of services provided by USCIS.

The Ombudsman is an independent, confidential, and impartial resource within the Department of Homeland Security.