Homeland Security

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Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

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Improving the Process for Payment of USCIS Filing Fees and Other Costs

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The Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, provides independent analysis of problems encountered by individuals and employers interacting with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and proposes changes to mitigate those problems.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines current payment methods, and recommends options to improve customer service and enhance efficiency in the processing and disbursement of funds to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

USCIS operates as a fee-for-service agency, receiving filing and other supplemental fees from customers to fund the administration of immigration benefits and services. Customers pay most USCIS fees[1] by check or money order.[2] For eight forms,[3] customers may access the USCIS online e-Filing system[4] to pay[5] filing fees by credit card or by entering bank account information.[6]

Paper-based payments containing mistakes that commonly occur when completing a check or money order are not accepted by USCIS, and often result in the rejection of the corresponding

[1] For the purpose of this study, "USCIS fees" encompasses filing, supplemental, biometric, and derivative costs, unless otherwise specified. Filing fees are the costs associated with specific forms. Supplemental fees are additional fees, aside from filing fees, that may be required for certain forms, such as charges for specified employers filing H1-B or L-1 petitions. *See* INA §214(c)(9); INA §214(c)(12). Biometric fees are required to cover the costs of fingerprinting, photographing, and required security checks. Derivative costs include any additional fees required to process certain family members included on an application or petition.
[2] The Chicago Lockbox will only accept payment of fees via money order, cashier's check, or personal check. USCIS, *Tips for Filing Petitions and Applications to the National Benefits Center* (April 2008), *www.uscis.gov* (accessed Mar. 27, 2009).
[3] The eight forms currently accessible through the e-Filing system include: Form I-90 (Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card), Form I-129 (Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker), Form I-131 (Application for Travel Document), Form I-140 (Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker), Form I-539 (Application to Extend / Change Nonimmigrant Status), Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization), Form I-821 (Application for Temporary Protected Status), and Form I-907 (Request for Premium Processing Service). USCIS, *Forms Currently Available for e-Filing and Form-Specific e-Filing Instructions* (April 8, 2008), *www.uscis.gov* (accessed Mar. 18, 2009).
[4] The USCIS e-Filing system is operated by Pay.gov, a program developed by the U.S Department of Treasury to allow individuals to complete and submit forms online, as well as make electronic payments to government agencies. The USCIS e-Filing system is an Open Collections Interface (Interactive), a Pay.gov proprietary interface that provides connectivity from agency websites to the Pay.gov collection service. *See generally www.pay.gov* (accessed Mar. 17, 2009).
[5] USCIS will accept credit card, debit card, checking account, and savings account payments for these eight forms. USCIS, *Paying Fees for E-filed Applications, www.uscis.gov* (accessed Mar. 18, 2009).
[6] USCIS offers electronic payment options (i.e., credit / debit card) at certain field offices.

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application or petition.[7] At the Chicago Lockbox,[8] USCIS rejects an estimated 350 filings *each day* due to these mistakes,[9] and similar rejections regularly occur at other USCIS receipting facilities.[10] Such rejections cause customers potential denial or loss of immigration benefits, and waste USCIS resources.[11] Additionally, USCIS' limited payment options hinder its potential to serve customers. Current options do not include modernized, user-friendly electronic payment methods, such as batch filing and shopping cart options, used by many web-based retailers and other U.S. fee-for-service government agencies.[12] Such interfaces would help customers submit correct payments and minimize the complexity of paying USCIS fees.

To improve customer service and agency efficiency, the Ombudsman recommends that USCIS consider implementing:

1. **A batch filing system that would enable high volume filers to pay USCIS fees online;**

2. **An online shopping cart mechanism that would simplify the process of identifying appropriate USCIS forms, calculating related fees, and submitting payments;**

3. **An expansion of the payment options within the e-Filing system to include all USCIS fees; and,**

4. **Additional visual and written aids within current instructions to ensure that payments are submitted correctly.**

Adoption of these payment process changes would reduce the number of rejections due to technical errors, improve USCIS service, and make the process of paying and receiving filing fees and other payments more convenient and efficient for both customers and the agency.

II. BACKGROUND

Payment Method Modernization Efforts

USCIS has faced challenges in expanding and modernizing e-Filing payment methods. In 2003, USCIS initiated the e-Filing system with two forms, and expanded it in 2004 to include eight

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[7] *See* Table A, *infra* at 4; Information provided to the Ombudsman by the Chicago Lockbox facility (Oct. 24, 2008).
[8] USCIS lockbox facilities, located in Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Dallas, receive certain types of benefits applications. The lockbox facilities perform initial review of documents and deposit fees. They then forward filings to the appropriate USCIS facility for further processing and adjudication. The lockbox facilities are operated by a Financial Agent of the U.S. Department of Treasury.
[9] Information provided to the Ombudsman by USCIS (Mar. 16, 2009) (USCIS estimates that 3.2% of 10,000-12,000 applications received each day are rejected due to fee reasons).
[10] Data provided by USCIS to the Ombudsman (Jan. 16, 2009); s*ee also* Table B, *infra* at 5.
[11] *See* Ombudsman's Annual Report 2006, p. 45.
[12] The Internal Revenue Service offers customers an online shopping cart mechanism for submitting tax payments, and the United States Postal Service offers a similar program for purchasing stamps, mailing supplies, and other products. *See generally* *https://www.eftps.gov/eftps/home.do* and *http://www.usps.com/* (accessed Feb. 23, 2009).

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forms. In May 2005, USCIS developed an information technology transformation plan that contemplated expanding e-Filing initiatives, but, it was not implemented.[13] USCIS has not continued to develop e-Filing, nor has it expanded the system to include more than eight forms since 2004, although there are now over 40 USCIS forms and fees.

There are indications that USCIS is again making strides to modernize its payment methods. The Ombudsman understands that, in FY 2008, the Lockbox Operations Division[14] of USCIS began an expansion initiative to centralize intake of all applications, petitions, and fees at lockbox facilities.

As part of this initiative, USCIS intends to replace the current e-Filing system with a more streamlined solution.[15] The Ombudsman understands that USCIS, through its Lockbox Operations Division, is working with U.S. Department of Treasury officials and JPMorgan[16] to build a comprehensive e-Filing system that incorporates a user-driven, user-centric model for processing e-payments and forms, and ultimately moves away from the traditional method of submitting paper documents.[17] Other payment options, such as batch filing systems for high volume filers and shopping cart mechanisms, are also being discussed.[18] USCIS officials acknowledge, however, that high costs of the e-Filing system, failure to improve the agency case management system, and delays in making cost estimates and assigning system ownership have prolonged the implementation process.[19] Despite these constraints, USCIS and the U.S. Department of Treasury are cooperating to improve the security and efficiency of fee collection systems, while USCIS' Transformation Initiative develops and implements new payment methods.[20]

In November 2008, USCIS announced its award of the Transformation Solution Architect Task Order contract, a comprehensive effort to modernize the agency's operations. The agency's five-year, $491 million dollar Transformation Initiative focuses on improving case management throughout USCIS, and also proposes improvements to electronic filing and payment processes.[21] USCIS' strategic plan includes mechanisms that will allow customers to create accounts, complete and submit applications online, and make payments electronically.[22] The

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[13] *See* Ombudsman's Annual Report 2006, p. 62.
[14] The Lockbox Operations Division manages the USCIS lockbox facilities, which provide general intake services including: receiving, opening, and sorting mail; accepting or rejecting applications and related fees; and, processing receipt notices for accepted applications and returning rejected applications.
[15] Information provided during a Financial Management Service, U.S. Department of Treasury briefing with the Ombudsman (Nov. 25, 2008).
[16] JPMorgan is a provider of lockbox services for USCIS, as authorized by the U.S. Department of Treasury. As a financial agent, JPMorgan manages the intake of USCIS benefit applications and the collection of associated fees submitted directly by mail.
[17] Information provided during a Financial Management Service, U.S. Department of Treasury briefing with the Ombudsman (Nov. 25, 2008).
[18] *Id.*
[19] Information provided during a USCIS, Lockbox Operations Division briefing with the Ombudsman (Sept. 25, 2008).
[20] Information provided to the Ombudsman by the Financial Management Division of the U.S. Department of Treasury (Mar. 18, 2009).
[21] Hsu, Spencer S. "Immigration to Go Paperless," *Washington Post* (Nov. 7, 2008); USCIS Transformation Program: Concept of Operations, Version 1.5 (Mar. 28, 2007), p. 26, *http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/Transformation-ConOps_Mar07.pdf* (accessed Jan. 5, 2009).
[22] Information provided during a USCIS briefing to the Ombudsman (Jan. 29, 2009).

Ombudsman understands from USCIS that these capabilities are currently in the development stages. They are scheduled for initial deployment in the spring of 2010 and full implementation in the fall of 2012.[23]

Systemic Problems

Currently, the lack of a user-friendly payment structure, failure to expand the e-Filing system, and use of confusing payment instructions cause systemic problems for both customers and USCIS.

Systemic Problem 1 - Paper-based Payments Can Easily Be Submitted in Error, Causing Rejections, Added Costs, Delays, and Possible Loss of Important Immigration Benefits for USCIS Customers.

Table A - Common Fee Mistakes[24]
• No amount written • Incorrect amount • Written and numerical amounts do not match • Stale-dated checks • Missing signature • Incorrect payee • Check or money order not submitted through a U.S. bank or in U.S. dollars

The majority of USCIS customers pay filing fees and other costs through paper-based payment methods (i.e., check or money order).[25] If a check or money order is submitted improperly (see Table A), a USCIS receipting location will not accept the payment, which may, and often does, result in a rejection of an application or petition. In fact, the Ombudsman has learned that if one improperly completed check or money order is used to pay for multiple forms, *all* forms are rejected.

Several factors aside from simple human error may cause a petition or application to be rejected due to a fee issue. Language barriers, for example, may result in a customer misinterpreting the payment instructions provided by USCIS. Long receipting delays by USCIS may cause checks to become stale-dated (over six months old) or increase the probability of a bounced check.[26] Finally, individuals and immigration practitioners agree that ambiguity in filing fee instructions may also lead to submissions being rejected due to fee issues.[27]

Rejection of an application or petition due to a fee issue can have serious consequences. In time-sensitive cases, the need for a customer to resubmit rejected applications or petitions can result in the denial or loss of the immigration benefit that was originally timely-sought. Rejections can

[23] Information provided by USCIS to the Ombudsman (Feb. 23, 2009).
[24] Information provided to the Ombudsman by Chicago Lockbox facility (Oct. 24, 2008); Information provided by USCIS to the Ombudsman (Dec. 3, 2008).
[25] USCIS Transformation Program: Concept of Operations, Version 1.5 (Mar. 28, 2007), p. 15, *http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/Transformation-ConOps_Mar07.pdf* (accessed Jan. 5, 2009).
[26] Ombudsman teleconference, "USCIS Receipting Delay - How Does This Affect You?" (Oct. 12, 2007).
[27] The Ombudsman has observed and heard from customers and stakeholders that it can be difficult to determine which fees correspond to certain applications and petitions. For example, one stakeholder noted that it is often unclear when the Fraud Prevention and Detection Fee is required. Another stakeholder noted that in complex cases involving numerous derivative, supplementary, and biometric fees, attorneys and customers can easily miscalculate total amounts, resulting in the rejection of all applications.

cause a customer to miss important filing deadlines, such as the annual numerical cap for certain nonimmigrant categories, or in other cases, loss of a priority date.[28] Conversely, USCIS is negatively affected by fee-rejected cases, as the agency incurs extra administrative costs associated with mailing tens of thousands of rejection notices annually, thus, shifting resources away from eligible applications and petitions.[29]

Fee Rejection Data

The Ombudsman analyzed information regarding rejections throughout the four USCIS service centers and the Chicago Lockbox, all of which are major receipting locations.[31]

Data from USCIS service centers are difficult to evaluate, as they do not categorize their rejections by fee issues. Rather, the USCIS service centers separate rejected applications and petitions into *manual* or *system* rejects,[32] and fee issues may fall under either category. Table B illustrates that fee issues may contribute to thousands of rejections *per month* throughout USCIS, although the precise number is unknown.

Table B [30]

Rejection Data throughout all USCIS Service Centers

December 2008

Service Center	Manual Rejects	System Rejects
California	3,628	978
Nebraska	2,663	2,363
Texas	6,722	666
Vermont	6,198	135

Conversely, the Lockbox Operations Division maintains records that distinguish reasons for rejections.[33] The Chicago Lockbox, for example, estimates that 3.2 percent of the 10,000-12,000 filings received per day are rejected for fee-related reasons.[34] The Ombudsman suggests that USCIS consider maintaining similar records throughout all receipting facilities to identify specific fee mistakes that occur most frequently, and assess ways in which to reduce future fee-based rejections.

[28] The filing of certain petitions (or of a labor certification application for employment-based petitioners) establishes a "priority date." Priority dates determine a beneficiary's "place in line" for a visa, relative to other beneficiaries of the same category and nationality. *See generally* 22 C.F.R. § 42.53 (2008).
[29] *See* Ombudsman's Annual Report 2006, p. 45.
[30] Data provided by USCIS to the Ombudsman (Jan. 16, 2009).
[31] This study does not incorporate rejection data from USCIS field offices.
[32] A *manual reject* is detected in the mail intake process. The application is returned to the customer prior to any data entry into the CLAIMS system, and is not assigned a receipt number. Manual rejects may occur due to defects on the face of a check or money order — incorrect payee, no amount written, stale-dated — or for not being submitted through a U.S. bank or in U.S. dollars. A *system reject* is detected in the internal processing portion of the receipting process. The application is returned to the customer after data are entered into the CLAIMS system. System rejects are given receipt numbers. Applications are rejected because of incorrect fees, unsigned or missing remittances, or unsigned or improperly signed applications. Information provided to the Ombudsman by USCIS (Dec. 9, 2008).
[33] The Ombudsman repeatedly requested rejection data from the Lockbox Operations Division, and was only provided with relevant data as this recommendation was going to press. From the data received, it appears that rejections for fee reasons are prevalent throughout several lockbox facilities, although exact rejection rates are unknown. The Ombudsman will continue to monitor rejection rates throughout the Lockbox Operations Division, and provide updated information in its 2009 Annual Report.
[34] Information provided to the Ombudsman by USCIS (Mar. 16, 2009). This number approximates 350 rejected filings per day, nearly 2,000 per week, 7,000 per month, and on the order of 84,000 annually.

Systemic Problem 2 - Failure to Provide Expanded Electronic Payment Options Limits USCIS Potential in Customer Service.

While it is necessary for USCIS to accept traditional forms of payment (i.e., checks, money orders), it is also important to offer customers payment options that are modern and convenient.[35] Electronic payment options offer customers several important benefits not available through paper-based payment methods.

- **Immediate Confirmation of Payment**. Electronic payments are received and confirmed immediately by USCIS, whereas paper-based payments can take several days or longer to be received and processed.[36] In time-sensitive cases, knowing that a payment has been received and confirmed provides customers with peace of mind.

- **Accuracy and Simplicity.** Commonly, electronic payment systems automatically prompt the user to pay the correct, up-to-date filing fee, and do not accept incorrect payments, thereby eliminating the possibility of a rejection on the basis of a fee issue. Conversely, payments made through paper-based means require that an applicant research the proper fee online, make calculations, and complete a check or money order manually. This process can increase error and result in the rejection of a submission.

- **Convenience**. Customers may find it more convenient to pay for immigration benefits over time through credit card payments, rather than pay in full with a check or money order.[37] It also appears from the Ombudsman's research and stakeholder input that it is far easier to determine when a credit card payment to USCIS is made than to track payment on a money order.[38]

Additionally, studies indicate that electronic payment systems are more cost-effective than paper-based payments for the payer, payee, and bank. Paper checks incur associated expenditures such as the cost of accepting a check, required postage, and check distribution, among other factors.[39] Conversely, electronic payments reduce the need for resources associated with processing paper checks, allowing USCIS to expand or improve other processes.[40]

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[35] Information provided by Chicago Lockbox facility (Oct. 24, 2008) (Approximately 60% of paper-based payments are money orders, and USCIS reasons that this figure is understandable because many applicants may not have U.S. checking accounts).
[36] *Id.* (Check processing times differ as a result of an applicant's bank, and how rapidly it processes checks).
[37] "Adjustment of the Immigration and Naturalization Benefit Application and Petition Fee Schedule," 72 Fed. Reg. 29870 (May 30, 2007). Several commentaries suggested that USCIS accept credit cards for all filings for convenience to customers, and also to allow filers to take advantage of the credit aspect of cards, such as being able to pay for fees over time. USCIS responded to this suggestion by noting that implementation of electronic payment options for all filings was not possible at the time, but planned to expand electronic payment options over time as receipting by lockboxes increased.
[38] The Ombudsman has observed and heard from stakeholders that it can be difficult to track payments made through money orders, because there may not be a tracking number or easily-accessible statement through which funds can be traced.
[39] David B. Humphrey, Moshe Kim, & Bent Vale, *Realizing Gains from Electronic Payments: Costs, Pricing, and Payment Choice*, 33 Journal of Money, Credit and Banking 216, 220 (2001). Experts estimate that the average payment cost for a payer, payee, and bank totals $2.93 per check but only $1.31 per Automated Clearing House transfer, or electronic payment, based on weighted comparisons of costs associated with consumer, business, and government payments.
[40] *Id.* at 217.

III. ANALYSIS

The Ombudsman recommends that USCIS provide modernized and user-friendly payment options, and clearer instructions on submitting filing fees. Specifically, the Ombudsman recommends that USCIS consider implementing:

1. **A batch filing system that would enable high volume filers to pay USCIS fees online.**

A batch filing system would allow high volume filers (i.e., major corporations, large employers, law firms) to enroll in a master account from which all filing fees could be disbursed directly to USCIS through a secure, online system. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) currently offers a similar batch filing system, the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS), for tax practitioners who regularly file tax payments on behalf of clients.[41]

The proposed batch filing system may require that a high volume filer enroll in the online system and set up an account with a designated third-party financial institution through which all funds would be held and all filing fees disbursed to USCIS. Enrolled users would be required to submit a form from clients authorizing the user to make payments on their behalf, after which each client would receive a unique identifier (i.e. pin number, access code).[42] Once these steps are completed, a high volume filer would be able to pay USCIS fees on behalf of clients, sort payment history, check payment status, and make enrollment changes online.[43]

A batch filing system would improve customer service and enhance efficiency in the processing and disbursement of funds by allowing high volume filers to securely and efficiently make electronic payments to USCIS on behalf of their clients, thus, limiting the rate of rejections due to mistakes on checks and money orders. It would be up to the discretion of filers and their clients to use the batch filing system in lieu of paying USCIS fees by check or money order. High volume filers may also find it more efficient to track payments made to USCIS online. Finally, USCIS would benefit from a batch filing system, as it would facilitate agency compliance with federal mandates to modernize systems and improve customer service.[44]

Batch filing has been a successful program for the IRS,[45] and complies with rules of professional conduct that govern attorney accounts[46] and electronic payments,[47] making it an effective, operationally sound payment option.

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[41] Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, *https://www.eftps.gov/eftps/* (accessed Mar. 18, 2009).
[42] Currently, the IRS uses Form 8655 (Reporting Agent Authorization) to prove authorization of a payment made on behalf of a client by an agent. A similar form, such as a Form G-28 (Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Representative), could be utilized within USCIS.
[43] Information provided during an IRS briefing with the Ombudsman (Nov. 6, 2008); *see also* Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, *https://www.eftps.gov/eftps/* (accessed Mar. 18, 2009).
[44] *See generally* "E-Government Strategy, Implementing the President's Management Agenda for E-Government," (April 2003) *http://contacts.gsa.gov/graphics/fts/President_E-Gov_Strategy.pdf* (accessed Jan. 28, 2009).
[45] Information provided during an IRS briefing with the Ombudsman (Dec.17, 2008) (Since the inception of the EFPTS program and other e-Filing initiatives, e-Filing as a whole has increased by approximately 38% throughout the IRS.)
[46] Information provided to the Ombudsman by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (Mar. 13, 2009) (Implementation of a batch filing system within USCIS would comply with rules of professional conduct that govern attorney accounts, provided

2. **An online shopping cart mechanism that would simplify the process of identifying appropriate USCIS forms, calculating related fees, and submitting payments.**

Customers have also expressed interest to the Ombudsman regarding a more user-friendly payment system that would allow applicants to pay for immigration benefits through an online shopping cart structure.[48] Rather than requiring customers to navigate the USCIS website for different immigration forms, USCIS could pose questions that would guide them to complete the appropriate forms and pay the corresponding filing fees through various electronic mediums, including credit card or bank account withdrawals.

Online shopping cart structures are user-friendly and beneficial to both vendors and buyers. These mechanisms are popular in private sector e-commerce, other fee-for-service government agencies,[49] and foreign immigration services.[50] Ultimately, shopping cart structures would enable customers to easily navigate the USCIS website and efficiently pay fees.

3. **An expansion of the payment options within the e-Filing system to include all USCIS fees.**

Currently, eight filing fees may be paid through the e-Filing system. They correspond to what USCIS deems to be the highest-volume and most basic forms received.[51] However, as there are over 50 existing USCIS fees, an expansion to include *all* USCIS fees would enable customers to make more payments in a fast, easy, and convenient manner.

Providing the option to pay USCIS fees online would not require e-Filing of the immigration benefit application itself; rather, customers would submit an electronic payment, print out the payment confirmation sheet, and attach it to the corresponding application or petition. Such a mechanism would allow USCIS to make immediate progress in the areas of modernization and customer service through the expansion of an existing system, while more permanent changes are made as part of the Transformation Initiative.

The Ombudsman acknowledges that implementation of this expansion would likely require that USCIS examine its existing refund procedures to address an increased volume of electronic payments.

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the new system allows for individual payments to be made on behalf of individual clients from a lawyer's trust account, rather than an aggregation of fees for multiple clients).

[47] EFTPS complies with banking standards established by the National Agency Clearing House Association (NACHA), regarding the transferring of funds. NACHA is a not-for-profit association that oversees the Automated Clearing House (ACH) Network, an electronic payment network. NACHA is responsible for the administration, development, and enforcement of the *NACHA Operating Rules* and management practices for the ACH Network. *See* NACHA – The Electronic Payments Association *http://www.nacha.org/about/default.htm* (accessed Mar. 18, 2009).

[48] Ombudsman teleconference, "USCIS E-Filing and Filing Fee Payment Options: How Are They Working for You?" (Nov. 24, 2008).

[49] *See generally https://www.eftps.gov/eftps/home.do* and *http://www.usps.com/* (accessed Feb. 23, 2009).

[50] The Canadian immigration system allows customers to view their immigration application and petition options and submit electronic payments through an online shopping cart mechanism. *See generally* Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *www.cic.gac.ca* (accessed Feb. 23, 2009).

[51] Information provided during a USCIS, Lockbox Operations Division briefing with the Ombudsman (Sep. 25, 2008).

4. **Additional visual and written aids within current instructions to ensure that payments are submitted correctly.**

To limit the number of application and petition rejections based on fee mistakes that occur upon completing a check or money order, USCIS should provide aids to assist customers making payments.

The Ombudsman recommends providing translations of form instructions and including visual aids, such as pictures of correctly completed checks and money orders, in order to improve the clarity of instructions. Studies support the notion of including visual aids to persons with limited English proficiency, for example, as a means of enhancing access to information.[52] Implementation of these measures also would provide USCIS the means to better comply with federal mandates that require agencies to provide information to the public in accessible ways. [53]

USCIS instructions for several forms include checklists to ensure that certain filing information is provided, such as supporting evidence and photographs; a separate checklist for payments detailing common fee mistakes would be helpful in preventing unnecessary rejections. Currently, private sector companies regularly include checklists on envelopes and automatically generate checklists before confirming a purchase online. USCIS should employ checklists to help customers avoid common fee mistakes, and allow for corrections at the time of application.

Finally, regarding the eight forms currently available for e-Filing, USCIS should provide a link to the e-Filing system within each form's corresponding payment instructions to increase customer awareness of this option.

IV. CONCLUSION

Improvements to the current USCIS payment system would provide customers more efficient and expanded methods to pay required USCIS fees, improve customer service, and limit rejections due to avoidable fee issues. USCIS should consider making such improvements at the earliest opportunity in the Transformation process.

The Ombudsman will continue to closely monitor the Transformation Initiative and other USCIS programs to expand and improve payment methods.

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[52] Youdelman et al., "Providing Language Interpretation Services in Health Care Settings: Examples from the Field," National Health Law Program, May 2002, *www.healthlaw.org* (accessed Jan. 27, 2008) (In healthcare settings, interpretation services often utilize and encourage visual aids in addition to translation of documents to emphasize important information to limited English proficient persons, and to ensure that patients have access to appropriate care).

[53] Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," requires federal agencies to identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency, and develop systems to provide those services in an accessible manner. It is also expected that agencies provide such access in conjunction with their mission. Policy guidance, "Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency," was issued pursuant to authority granted by Executive Order 13166. *See* 65 Fed. Reg. 159 (Aug. 16, 2000).

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