



Update on Pending FBI Name Checks and Projected Naturalization Processing Times

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Ombudsman announced a significant decline in the number of pending FBI name checks for individuals seeking immigration benefits in the United States.

FBI name checks, one of several security screening tools used by the USCIS, have delayed the adjudication of benefits for many thousands of applicants.

"The significant reduction in long-pending FBI name checks will result in improved service for USCIS customers," USCIS Ombudsman Michael Dougherty said. "Congress provided the necessary funding for USCIS and the FBI to complete a larger percentage of FBI name checks in a timely manner. We appreciate the resolve of USCIS and the FBI in realizing this customer service achievement; both lack of funding and delays had been a significant concern of my office. We are happy to see significant progress is being made."

The USCIS Ombudsman had identified FBI name check delays as one of the major hurdles to improved customer service at USCIS in his 2008 and 2007 Annual Reports to Congress.

- There were 269,943 name checks pending on May 6, 2008. There are 95,449 pending as of August 12, 2008.
- There were 185,162 name checks pending for more than six months on May 6, 2008. There are 61,817 pending more than six months as of August 12, 2008.
- USCIS met its April 2, 2008 goal to process all name checks pending more than two years by July 2008. ["USCIS and FBI Release Joint Plan to Eliminate Backlog of FBI Name Checks: Partnership Establishes Series of Milestones To Complete Checks."](#)

The USCIS Ombudsman's Annual Reports discussing FBI name checks can be found at [Section II, A, pp. 5-7](#) (2008); and [Section III, F, pp. 37-45](#) (2007).

The Ombudsman also noted that USCIS has updated its projected naturalization processing times in an [August 11, 2008 announcement](#).

USCIS now anticipates naturalization application processing will average 10-12 months nationally by the end of September 2008. Previously USCIS estimated that processing naturalization applications would take 16-18 months before reducing the estimate to 14-16 months and later to 13-15 months.

Average processing times significantly increased after the surge in immigration filings in the summer of 2007. From June 2007 to August 2007, USCIS received nearly 3 million applications, compared to 1.8 filings during the same period in the previous year. In FY 2007, USCIS received 1.4 million naturalization applications, nearly double the annual volume.

The USCIS Ombudsman's 2008 annual report comparing naturalization application processing times can be found at [Section II, A, pp. 14-15](#).

The USCIS Ombudsman is an independent office of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that reports

directly to the DHS Deputy Secretary. As mandated by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 § 452, the US CIS Ombudsman: (1) assists individuals and employers in resolving problems with USCIS; (2) identifies areas in which individuals and employers have problems in dealing with USCIS; and (3) proposes changes to mitigate identified problems. For more information about the Office of the USCIS Ombudsman please visit www.dhs.gov/cisombudsman.

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