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Domestic Policy Council

Government and Stakeholders – Working Together to Find Solutions

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This week, I had the pleasure to share remarks with an auditorium full of immigration professionals as they prepared to spend their day identifying ways to continue improving citizenship and immigration services provided in our nation.

As part of its increased effort to provide a forum for government and non-government stakeholders to collaborate on sometimes challenging issues, the Department of Homeland Security's [Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman](#) (Ombudsman's Office) hosted its First Annual Conference on October 20th at the U.S. National Archives, a fitting location given that it is home to millions of U.S. immigration records and information.

This full-day conference facilitated dialogue between multiple federal agencies, leaders from national and community-based organizations, and nearly 300 government and stakeholder participants on pressing immigration services issues spanning humanitarian, employment, and family programs.

As an Administration, we are committed to doing the best possible job of administering the law and providing information and services to the people we come into contact with. We also know that the best way to do this well is to stay in constant contact with constituents and stakeholders who can tell us frankly what's going well and what isn't. The Ombudsman's Office seeks to learn from individuals' experiences with a federal agency – the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) – that interacts greatly with the public so that we can improve the way that they carry out their day-to-day activities. At stake is something very fundamental: the relationship between the government and the people it serves. In preparing for the conference, I thought back to my very first memory of an interaction with the government, it was when I was very young and accompanied my mother to take her fingerprints before becoming a citizen. It made an enormous impression on me in many ways, including my commitment to public service. That experience is what this agency delivers, and how we do it matters.

The Ombudsman's Office Annual Conference is one result of an increased focus by this Administration over the last two years to facilitate solution-oriented dialogue across federal agencies with stakeholders and members of the public. USCIS has also engaged in an unprecedented amount of outreach to a variety of stakeholders that interact with their agency, through their [Office of Public Engagement](#), which was created at the start of the Obama Administration.

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Ombudsman January Contreras noted: "What makes our work in this conference particularly valuable is that we have gathered, from across the Federal Government and non-profit and private sectors, as immigration professionals who share the same goal of continuing to improve immigration services."

Participants included federal representatives from the Department of Homeland Security's Ombudsman's Office, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Justice, and the Department of State. They had thoughtful substantive discussions that will contribute mightily to the work of USCIS, and ultimately to their impact on the people we all serve.

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