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For Immediate Release
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Grassley Reveals Evidence of Improper Influence over Visa Policy

WASHINGTON – Senator Chuck Grassley today asked the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Inspector General who oversees the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to address evidence from statements made by immigration officers that senior U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service leaders are putting pressure on employees to approve more visa applications, even if the applications might be fraudulent or the applicant is ineligible. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is an agency within the Department of Homeland Security.

Grassley first brought attention to this issue in a letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Alejandro Mayorkas in September. Since then, additional agency insiders have provided new information suggesting that the director is responsible for fostering an environment in the California Service Center that encourages the approval of as many applications as possible, regardless of eligibility or potential fraud. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services employees, a "visibly agitated" Mayorkas asked employees, "Why would you be focusing on [fraud instead of approvals?" and, on a separate occasion, at a conference in Landsdowne, Virginia, said that there are some "managers with black spots on their hearts" in U.S. Citizenship and Immigratio Services because they would not approve more visa applications.

"The American people need to know that the rule of law isn't being undermined by political leaders," Grassley said. "The safety of America's citizens is the Department of Homeland Security's primary duty, and I expect Secretary Napolitano and Inspector General Skinner to address this situation quickly and thoroughly."

Grassley first raised concerns over U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services visa policy after whistleblower accusations that supervisors directed staff at the California Service Center to "find a way" to approve visa applications and expressed a desire to "instruct generosity" when processing immigration benefits. Since then, additional agency staff has come forward with allegations of retaliation and pressure asserted by leadership.

Grassley's September 10, 2010 letter to Director Mayorkas is available here.

Director Mayorkas's September 24, 2010 response is available here.

Grassley's October 14, 2010 letter to Secretary Napolitano is available here.

Grassley's October 14, 2010 letter to Inspector General Skinner is available here.

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