



January 17, 2008

Dr. Emilio Gonzalez  
Director, US Citizenship and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20536

Dear Dr. Gonzalez:

The undersigned organizations are writing to you because we are deeply concerned about the current delays in naturalization processing.

The delays stem from last summer's surge in applications for citizenship and other immigration benefits. Immigrants had already begun applying for citizenship in much higher numbers throughout 2006, moved by a desire to become full members of our body politic and commit to their new home country. The fee increases announced in early 2007 provided even more motivation for these immigrants to not delay their applications any further.

Many of the undersigned organizations opposed fee increases of the magnitude that USCIS proposed and warned that if USCIS were to proceed with the fee increases, it must prepare for a surge in applications from immigrants wishing to avoid the fee increases. In fact, USCIS did move forward with the fee increases, but did not adequately prepare to handle such a surge.

Yet the surge happened, causing worsened delays. USCIS has stated that processing delays for citizenship applications could hit 18 months. Indeed, many applicants who filed before the fee increase have already had to wait four to five months just to get a receipt from USCIS. By the end of December, USCIS had not finalized plans for handling the backlog created last July.

Meanwhile, USCIS still appears to have no plan to address the thousands of applications that are still delayed due to name-check clearances. Approximately 150,000 citizenship applicants have waited more than six months, if not years, for their names to clear the FBI name-check process. These delays have hit several populations particularly hard; Arab and Muslim immigrants are disproportionately affected.

The processing backlogs and name check delays are preventing hardworking, patriotic immigrants from becoming full members of our nation. Specifically, these delays will disenfranchise thousands of immigrants who, applying more than a year prior to the upcoming Presidential election, had fully expected to be able to vote in this election. If USCIS does not

address the delays, these immigrants will not yet be citizens and will not be able to vote in the November election.

We urge you to take whatever measures may be necessary to alleviate the current backlogs and to ensure that the naturalization applications for these immigrants are promptly processed so that they may become citizens. Our nation should be doing whatever it can to enable legal immigrants to join the American community. Poor planning and bureaucratic delays should not bar the door to the American Dream. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

1. Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)

**National organizations**

2. Asian American Justice Center
3. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
4. American Immigration Lawyers Association
5. Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
6. International Immigrants Foundation
7. Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
8. National Immigration Forum
9. Asian Law Alliance
10. Asian Law Caucus
11. Dumaraonan USA
12. Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform
13. Irish Apostolate USA
14. National Council of La Raza
15. United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
16. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
17. Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
18. Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
19. Interfaith Worker Justice
20. South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT)
21. American Friends Service Committee
22. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
23. Center for Community Change
24. Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
25. Union for Reform Judaism
26. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
27. Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
28. National Immigration Law Center
29. National Immigrant Justice Center
30. American Jewish Committee
31. Gamaliel Foundation
32. Change to Win

**State/regional organizations**

33. Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
34. Idaho Community Action Network
35. CAUSA (Oregon)
36. CASA of Maryland
37. New Jersey Immigration Policy Network (NJIPN)
38. Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)
39. Maine People's Alliance
40. New York Immigration Coalition
41. Pennsylvania Council of Churches
42. Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
43. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
44. Hate Free Zone (Seattle WA)
45. Voces de la Frontera (Milwaukee WI)
46. Students United for Immigrant Rights (Racine WI)
47. Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (Seattle WA)
48. Washington Community Action Network
49. Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO)
50. Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)
51. American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California
52. ISALIAH - Gamaliel (Minnesota)
53. WISDOM – Gamaliel (Wisconsin)
54. Metropolitan Congregations United – Gamaliel (Missouri)
55. Transforming Action Through Power (TAP) – Gamaliel (Indiana)
56. Gamaliel of Michigan
57. UACT – Gamaliel (Connecticut)
58. Project IRENE (Illinois)

**Local organizations**

59. Centro de Amistad, Guadalupe AZ
60. Chicago Irish Immigrant Support, Chicago IL
61. Rock Valley College Refugee and Immigrant Services, Rockford IL
62. Erie Neighborhood House, Chicago IL
63. South Texas Immigration Council Inc., Brownsville, Texas
64. Immigrant Information Center, Jamaica Plain, MA
65. Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Chicago IL
66. Eirene Immigration Center, Camden NJ
67. Asbury United Methodist Church, Camden NJ
68. Tu Amigo Community Center, Camden NJ
69. La Mesa Del Pueblo Food Ministry, Camden NJ
70. The Resurrection Project, Chicago IL
71. Southwest Organizing Project, Chicago IL
72. Casa de Esperanza, Bound Brook NJ
73. Franciscan Order of Sacred Heart JPIC Office, Chicago IL
74. Jr's Roofing and Framing, Shelbyville TN
75. Law Office of Emily Love, P.C., Evanston IL

76. World Relief Chicago, Chicago IL
77. African Resource Center, Washington DC
78. Jewish Community Action, St. Paul, MN
79. Chinese Mutual Aid Association, Chicago IL
80. Scott D. Pollock & Associates, P.C., Chicago IL
81. Interfaith Legal Services for Immigrants, St. Louis MO
82. Digna Ochoa Center for Immigration Legal Assistance, Columbia, SC
83. Refugee Immigration Project, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Jacksonville FL
84. Law Office Of Brigit G. Alvarez, Los Angeles CA
85. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Chicago (HIAS Chicago), Chicago IL
86. Office of Nancy M. Vizer, P.C., Chicago IL
87. AzulaySeiden Law Group, Chicago IL
88. South-East Asia Center, Chicago IL
89. Bonilla Community Services, Matthews, NC
90. Law Office of Eleanor Kaplan Adams, San Diego CA
91. Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Chicago IL
92. Ebere N. Ekechukwu & Associates, P.C., Chicago IL
93. Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora, IL
94. Law Offices of Scott E. Bellgrau, P.C., Bensenville IL
95. Amigos Center, Fort Myers FL
96. Erwin, Martinkus & Cole, Ltd., Champaign IL
97. Law Office of Judith Michaels Morrow, San Francisco CA
98. Alaska Immigration Law Offices, Anchorage AK
99. Law Office of Mary O'Leary, Evanston IL
100. Community Legal Services, East Palo Alto CA
101. Hudson | May, LLC, Salem OR
102. Centro Legal De La Raza, Oakland CA
103. Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Portland ME
104. Law Offices of Ashley Mammo, P.C., West Bloomfield MI
105. Law Offices of Jesiros D. Bautista, Oakland CA
106. East Bay Community Law Center, Berkeley CA
107. Kathleen M. Weber Law Office, Seattle WA
108. Law Office of Maura B. Petersen, Santa Cruz CA
109. International Institute of the Bay Area, San Francisco CA
110. International Center of Greater Cincinnati (OH)
111. Youth Service Bureau of the Illinois Valley, Ottawa IL
112. Centro Latino Cuzcatlan, San Pablo CA
113. Latin American Coalition, Charlotte NC
114. Hanul Family Alliance, Chicago IL
115. East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center, Urbana IL
116. Maxwell Street Legal Clinic, Lexington, KY
117. Dady Law Office, Rockford IL
118. Jewish Child and Family Services, Chicago IL
119. Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc., Toledo OH
120. Berzon and Associates, Chicago IL
121. Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Chicago

122. Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
123. Latino Law Student Association, DePaul University, Chicago IL
124. Filipinos for Affirmative Action, Oakland CA
125. Conexion Americas, Nashville, TN
126. Rights for All People, Denver CO
127. Social Justice Group of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Hightstown, NJ
128. Law Office of Kevin Dixler, Chicago IL
129. St. Brigid's Casa Mary Johanna, Westbury NY
130. Centro Romero, Chicago IL
131. Law Offices of George L. Young, APC, San Marino CA
132. Chicagoland Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights, Chicago IL
133. Centro Hispano of Dane County, Madison WI
134. Alpha International American Immigrant, Seattle WA
135. Catholic Charities Immigration Services, Santa Rosa CA
136. Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, Los Angeles CA
137. International Friendship Center, Highlands NC
138. Center for New Americans, Northampton MA
139. Instituto del Progreso Latino, Chicago IL
140. Lutheran Children and Family Service, Philadelphia PA
141. Council on American Islamic Relation – Chicago Chapter (CAIR Chicago), Chicago IL
142. IRIS Integrated Refugee & Immigration Services, New Haven CT
143. Immigration Law Offices of Mahoney & Tomlinson, Sacramento CA
144. Gamaliel of Metro Chicago, Chicago IL
145. Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, Chicago IL
146. South Suburban Action Conference, Chicago IL
147. United Congregations of Metro-East, Madison IL
148. Quad Cities Interfaith, Rock Island IL
149. Justice Overcoming Boundaries, San Diego CA
150. Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network – Gamaliel, Pittsburgh PA
151. CAUSE, Oxnard CA
152. AMOS – Gamaliel, Cincinnati OH
153. NOAH – Gamaliel, Cleveland OH
154. ACTS – Gamaliel (Ohio)
155. MOSES – Gamaliel, Detroit MI
156. ISAAC – Gamaliel, Kalamazoo MI
157. EZEKIEL – Gamaliel, Grand Rapids MI
158. ARISE – Gamaliel, Albany NY
159. VOICE – Gamaliel, Buffalo NY
160. ACTS – Gamaliel, Syracuse NY
161. NOAH Niagara– Gamaliel, Buffalo NY
162. ABLE – Gamaliel, Atlanta GA
163. MICAH – Gamaliel, Milwaukee WI
164. ESTHER – Gamaliel, Waukesha WI
165. RIC – Gamaliel, Racine WI
166. East Boston Ecumenical Community Council (EBECC), Boston MA
167. Community Refugee & Immigration Services, Columbus, Ohio

## **Individuals**

168. Dr. Rogelio Reyes, San Diego State University, San Diego CA
169. Patrick Corr, immigration instructor, Pittsburgh PA
170. Pete Cerneka, Lebanon IL
171. Jeff Jennett, citizenship instructor, Highland Park IL
172. Victoria Palacios
173. Vaishali Mamgain, University of Southern Maine, Portland ME
174. Julie Turner-Lloveras, attorney, Sacramento CA
175. Lynne Weintraub, citizenship educator, Amherst MA
176. Alicia Armstrong, immigration paralegal, New York NY
177. Sarahid Rivera, legal advocate, Napa CA
178. Miguel Angel Castanon, Napa CA
179. Matthew Bernstein, director, immigration and nationality clinic, Chicago-Kent College of Law, Chicago IL
180. M. Lucero Ortiz, Washington DC
181. Teresa DeRush, Grand Junction CO
182. Laura P. Fernandez, Washington DC
183. Mary B. Godfrey, LMSW, Grand Rapids MI
184. Jillian Kong-Sivert, Esq., Scottsdale AZ
185. Rosa Mendosa, Muscatine IA