



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Straight from the Source

Immigration News from USCIS

February 2011

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1. USCIS Announces Grant Opportunities—USCIS has announced \$8.5 million in grant opportunities to help prepare lawful permanent residents for citizenship and promote immigrant integration. The grant opportunities will focus on strengthening citizenship preparation programs that provide direct services and increasing the capacity of organizations to offer citizenship services in underserved communities. Interested parties should visit www.grants.gov as soon as possible to learn how to apply. Applications are due by April 1, 2011. For more information, visit www.uscis.gov/grants or contact the USCIS Office of Citizenship by phone at 202-272-1280 or by e-mail at citizenshipgrantprogram@dhs.gov.



2. USCIS Issues Single Card for Employment Authorization and Advance Parole—USCIS is now issuing employment and travel authorizations on a single card for certain Adjustment of Status applicants. The new I-766 card looks a lot like the current Employment Authorization Document (EAD) but includes text that reads “Serves as I-512 Advance Parole.” The new card is also more secure and durable. An applicant may receive this card when he/she files an Application for Employment Authorization, Form I-765, and an Application for Travel Document, Form I-131, concurrently with or after filing Form I-485. USCIS will continue to issue separate EADs and Advance Parole documents as needed. Employers may accept the new card as a List A document when completing Form I-9. This card allows an applicant for adjustment of status to travel abroad and return to the U.S. without abandoning the pending adjustment application. The traveler must present the card to request parole through the port-of-entry. For more information, visit www.uscis.gov/news.

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3. Service Center Operations (SCOPs) Engages with Stakeholders—Service Center Operations is launching monthly stakeholder engagements, to be hosted via teleconference by one of the four Service Centers. Where two centers are cross-trained to adjudicate a particular form, both centers will participate. The first engagement will be hosted by the Texas Service Center on February 22 at 2:00 pm EST. To participate in this session, send an e-mail with your name and organization to Jack Jagers at tsc.university@dhs.gov. Future sessions are noted below:

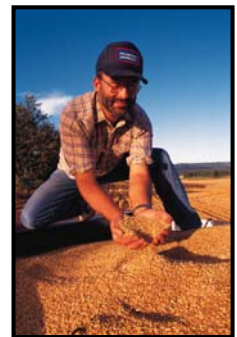
<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>
February 22, 2011	Form I-730 & Asylum Based Form I-485
March 29, 2011	Form I-129
April 26, 2011	Appeals and Motions
May 31, 2011	Customer Service
June 28, 2011	Employment-Based Form I-485
July 26, 2011	Form I-130 (Humanitarian Relief)
August 30, 2011	Form I-140
September 27, 2011	Child Status Protection Act

(These sessions replace the “TSC University” that the Texas Service Center used to hold.)



4. Delayed Immediate Relative I-130 Petitions—In November 2010, USCIS transferred about 36,000 Immediate Relative petitions from the California Service Center to the Texas Service Center because we believed it would be more expeditious. However, due to several unforeseen circumstances, many of these cases have not been processed as timely as we expected. On February 7, we implemented a rapid response plan and transferred a large number of these cases back to the California Service Center to take advantage of available resources. Petitioners should receive news of an action—such as an approval, denial or a Request for Evidence (RFE)—on their case from the California or Texas Service Centers by the end of February. Petitioners can monitor case status on [My Case Status](#) online. If petitioners do not see any action on the case by March 1, 2011, please send an e-mail to I-130Inquiries.TSC@dhs.gov. We sincerely regret any inconvenience this has caused. We are committed to resolving these pending cases as soon as possible.

5. New Countries May Participate in H-2A and H-2B Programs—The Department of Homeland Security has identified 53 countries whose nationals may participate in the H-2A and H-2B programs for the coming year. The H-2A program allows U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the United States to fill temporary agricultural jobs; the H-2B program allows U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the United States for temporary nonagricultural jobs. These two programs, with limited exception, are eligible only to nationals of countries designated by the DHS Secretary. A new list of eligible countries was published in the [Federal Register](#) on January 18, 2011. The designations are valid for one year from the date of publication.



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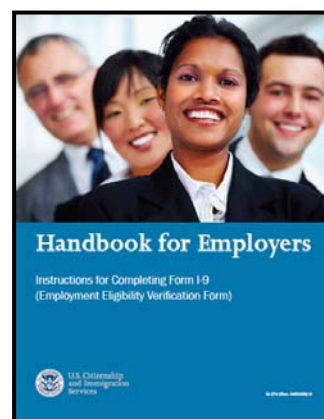
6. Vermont Service Center (VSC) Victims Unit—The VSC has sole jurisdiction to adjudicate Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA) and U and T visa petitions and has established mechanisms for victims and advocates to contact them with inquiries. This contact info is for victim case inquiries only.

Vermont Service Center Victims Unit

- Telephone inquiries: 802-527-4888
- I-360 inquiries: HotlineFollowUpI360.vsc@dhs.gov
- I-918 or I-914 inquiries: HotlineFollowUpI918I914.vsc@dhs.gov
- Law Enforcement Inquiries: LawEnforcement_UTVAWA.vsc@dhs.gov

7. USCIS Issues New Handbook for Employers—USCIS has released a new “[Handbook for Employers](#) (M-274), a guide to help employers understand the Form I-9 process. By law, all U.S. employers must verify the identity and employment authorization of and complete Form I-9 for every worker they hire. The latest revision has numerous updates and improvements including:

- New visual aids for completing Form I-9
- Examples of new relevant USCIS documents
- Expanded guidance on lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, individuals in Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and exchange visitors and foreign students
- Expanded guidance on extensions of stay for employees with temporary employment authorization
- Information for employers in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)



8. Several New Policy Memos Issued—USCIS has issued and posted the following policy memos on our website at: www.uscis.gov>laws>policy memoranda

- **February 8, 2011**—[Guidance for Coordinating the Adjudication of Applications and Petitions Involving Individuals in Removal Proceedings](#);
- **January 31, 2011**—[Notice to Applicants and Petitioners Concerning Ability to File Motions to Reopen or Reconsider](#);
- **January 27, 2011**—[Eligibility for Members of the National Guard of the United States to Naturalize under Section 329 of the Immigrant and Nationality Act and Acceptance of NGB Form 22 as Certification of Military Service for National Guard Veterans](#)
- **January 21, 2011**—[Temporary Protected Status Adjudications Involving "No Jail" or "No Incarceration" Certifications, and Reminders for Cases Involving Certain Potential Misdemeanors](#)
- **January 18, 2011**—[Implementation of Provisions of Public Law 111-230 Instituting Increased Fees for Certain H-1B and L-1 Petitions and Applications](#)

9. Overview of the National Benefits Center—On March 25, 2011, at 2:30 pm Central Time, the National Benefits Center (NBC) will offer stakeholders an “NBC Overview” via conference call and Webinar. More details on how to participate will be forthcoming next month.



10. How to Request Expedited Processing—USCIS considers requests for expedited processing on a case by case basis. USCIS prefers that you request expedited processing by calling our toll-free help line (1-800-375-5283) AFTER you have submitted your application/petition. The call center will take a “service request” and forward your request to the office handling your case.

The applicant/petitioner must show at least one of these criteria have been met:

- Severe financial loss to company or individual
- Extreme emergent situation
- Humanitarian situation
- Nonprofit status of requesting organization in furtherance of the cultural and social interests of the United States
- Department of Defense or National Interest Situation (Note: Request must come from official United States Government entity and state that delay will be detrimental to our Government)
- USCIS error
- Compelling interest of USCIS

11. Upcoming National Engagements—USCIS holds public engagement sessions to solicit public feedback on USCIS procedures and policies. The engagement calendar is viewable at: www.uscis.gov/publicengagement. Click on the links below for more details.

- February 18, 2011, 11:00 am East Coast Time, [N-648 Webinar](#) to review changes to the new N-648 form and instructions.
- February 24, 2011, 2:00 East Coast Time, [Quarterly National Stakeholder Meeting](#) to discuss USCIS operational issues. Stakeholders may join in person or via conference call.
- March 2, 2011, 2:00 pm East Coast Time, [Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate \(RAIO\) stakeholder engagement](#) to discuss changes to the organizational structure of the Directorate.
- March 17, 2011, 1:00 pm East Coast Time, [EB-5 \(Immigrant Investor Program\) Stakeholder Meeting](#). This meeting may be attended in person and by teleconference and Webinar. The address for in person attendance is USCIS California Service Center, 24000 Avila Road, 1st. Floor, Rooms A & B, Laguna Niguel, CA, 92677.



Straight from the Source is produced monthly by the USCIS Western Region Community Relations Program to provide a helpful “wrap-up” of key developments for USCIS stakeholders and customers. Please share this with colleagues and clients. To submit comments, or to be added to the distribution list, please e-mail janna.evans@dhs.gov.