

INS REPORTER

Houston District Office



Director's Corner

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our electronic newsletter, a new and dynamic communications initiative designed to provide key district stakeholders with timely and practical information about district policies, procedures and on going initiatives. Enhancing our dialogue and interaction with those we serve is paramount to my service vision and to the overall mission of our

district office. In addition to initiatives such as this one, I am also committed to having a visible presence in the community and to bring our services to outlying areas. This will lessen the need for customers to travel long hours for information, forms and inquiries that we could address in their own community. Our first information session is scheduled for late October in Freeport. It will be hosted by the enthusiastic staff of Congressman Ron Paul. We look forward to quarterly information sessions in all other areas under our jurisdiction and appreciate your invaluable assistance in coordinating them with our staff.

This past fiscal year was a phenomenal year for our district's service related units (Naturalization, Information and Adjudications). Challenges were turned into service opportunities resulting in the following accomplishments: The adjudication of 25,034 adjustment of status petitions, the naturalization of 22,200 new citizens, the adjudication of 20,620 employment authorization documents, 9,018 advance parole requests and

10,231 alien registration card replacements. Training has also played a critical role in our employee development agenda for the year. We have trained a cadre of Adjudicators for the LIFE Act late legalization cases during this fiscal year. We have interviewed a few of these cases during FY'02 and will address them in significantly higher numbers during FY'03. As of September 30th, there have been 4,945 late legalization cases filed by applicants within the Houston jurisdiction through the Missouri Processing Center.

Our Information Officers have revamped our process for adjudication of applications for employment authorization documents and issuance of cards resulting in greater efficiency. They have also handled several hundred customers per day seeking information, responding to status inquiries, reviewing applications prior to acceptance for processing, and staying abreast of changes in law and regulation.



I would be remiss if I did not take time to also share the outstanding accomplishments of our enforcement branch (Investigations, Inspections, and Detention and Removal). High profile investigations, the dismantling of alien smuggling networks, the expeditious removal of those ordered removed and the inspection of over two million international passengers in our airports are examples of the commitment and dedication of the team.

I welcome each of you to read this newsletter and ask you provide us with feedback and observations.

Hipolito M. Acosta
Interim District Director
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Points of Interest

- Office Closure 10/14/02
Columbus Day
- Naturalization Ceremony
10/18/02-N600
- Customer Service Center
1-800-375-5283
www.ins.gov
- TPS El Salvador
Re-registration due
9/9/02-11/9/02
- Information Session
Freeport, TX 10/28/02

Inside this issue:

Director's Corner	1
Houston Progress Report	1
TPS for El Salvador	2
SEVIS	2
Reentry Permit	3
Visiting Houston Office	3
ASC Information	3
Texas Service Center	4

INS ISSUES A REMINDER TO EMPLOYERS ABOUT EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY Protective Status

AUTOMATIC 6-MONTH EXTENSION OF EXISTING, TPS-RELATED EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION:

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reminds all employers that on July 9, 2002, the Attorney General extended Temporary Protected Status for El Salvador for a period of 12 months until September 9, 2003. This TPS extension, which covers more than 280,000 Salvadoran registrants, is effective September 9, 2002 and will remain in effect until September 9, 2003.

As part of the TPS extension, Attorney General Ashcroft extended the validity of the existing TPS-related employment authorization documents (EADs) from September 9, 2002, to March 9, 2003. This will prevent gaps in employment authorization for qualified re-registrants until March 9, 2003.

Given the large number of Salvadorans affected by this notice and given that the initial registration period runs for the duration of the ini-

tial 18-month designation period, the Immigration and Naturalization Service recognized that many re-registrants will not receive their new EADs until after their current EADs have expired on September 9, 2002.

*Employees or applicants may call the **OSC Employee Hotline at 1-800-255-7688** (assistance available in Spanish)*

Therefore, applicable EADs will be automatically extended for six months.

Automatic extension of employment authorization includes individuals with EADs bearing an expiration date of September 9, 2002, and the notation: "A-12" or "C-19" on the face of the card under "Category" for EADs issued on Form I-766; or "274A.12(A)(12)" or 274A.12(C)(19)" on the face of the card under "Provision of Law" for EADs issued on Form I-688B.

For completion of the Form I-9 at the time of hire or re-verification, qualified individuals may present to their employer a TPS-related EAD as proof of identity and employment authorization until March 9, 2003.

To minimize confusion over this extension at the time of hire or re-verification, qualified individuals may also present to their employer a copy of the Federal Register notice dated July 11, 2002, referencing the automatic extension of employment authorization documentation until March 9, 2003.

IMPORTANT REMINDER TO ALL EMPLOYERS:

INS reminds employers that the laws prohibiting unfair immigration-related employment practices remain in full force. For questions, employers may call the Service's Office of Business Liaison Employer Hotline at 1-800-357-2099 to speak to a Service representative. Also, employers may call the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices (OSC) Employer Hotline at 1-800-255-8155.

Certification Rule for SEVIS Enrollment

The INS is immediately implementing regulations governing the review and certification of schools for enrollment in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

This rule implements Phase II of the transition to SEVIS and provides that all schools not already approved to use SEVIS, including a school that would have been eligible for preliminary enrollment but did not enroll, must undergo a certification review.

Phase I enrollment or preliminary enrollment allowed schools that had been INS-certified for at least three years and were accredited by the Department of Education to enroll without paying the certification fee and in advance of a full review. Preliminary enrollment began on July 1, 2002.

All schools must enroll in SEVIS by January 30, 2003. Schools wishing to accept new students are strongly encouraged to submit Form I-17 in SEVIS by November 15, 2002.

All schools currently approved for attendance by non-immigrants are required to apply for INS review for continuation of approval and access no later than January 30th. The present approval of any school that has not filed for enrollment in SEVIS by January 30th will be automatically withdrawn on January 31st and the school will not be allowed to accept foreign students.

Schools must electronically complete a Form I-17 (*Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student*) in SEVIS and submit a certification fee of \$580 by November 15, 2002. Any school wishing to admit new foreign students must be using SEVIS by January 30th. Schools that were approved for preliminary enrollment by the INS must complete the certification review process by May 14, 2004. The INS will review the approval of the school every two years.

VISITING THE HOUSTON DISTRICT OFFICE

When visiting the INS an over the door sign instructs visitors to follow the yellow line for all services and designated signs for appointments.

Limited amounts of Exam Inquiry numbers are issued Monday thru Thursday for persons requesting status on cases filed prior to 1999. Exam inquiry numbers are also issued to applicants who at the time of the interview needed additional documentation. Documents were submitted and at least 6 months have lapsed without any response from this office.

Limited amounts of Naturalization Inquiry numbers are issued Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

ALL SERVICE CENTER ISSUES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE SERVICE CENTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTION ON THE APPLICATION.

For status inquiries, customers can also call the National Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

If all the inquiry numbers have been given out, applicants are encouraged to fill out a "Status Inquiry" (G-14) form and to leave it in Window 16 for mail response. Those inquiries are given at the end of the day to an employee who reviews the inquiries and responds to the applicants within 3 weeks.

Numbers are issued on a first come first served basis. The amount of numbers issued daily is dependent on the number of Information Officers on duty. Most customers that arrive before 7:00 a.m. are able to get a number for filing or to make an inquiry. It is not necessary to come here at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. in the morning.

Getting a Reentry Permit

Lawful permanent residents or conditional permanent residents who wish to remain outside the United States for more than one year, but less than two, require a Reentry Permit (I-131). A Reentry Permit is not required for a trip that is shorter than one year, (you should note that an absence of more than one year will break the period of continuous residence required to become a citizen, even if a Reentry Permit is issued). A Reentry Permit is also issued to lawful permanent residents who want to travel outside the United States, but can not get a national passport from their country of nationality. A Reentry Permit is usually valid for two years.

Application Support Centers (ASC)

All Permanent Residence (I-551) cards with an expiration date and in good condition must be filed at an ASC within 6 months of the expiration date. The customer should bring \$130.00 money order or cashiers check, two INS standard photos, a copy of the front and back of their I-551 card and their expiring or expired I-551 card. After the I-

90 form has been filed and the fee has been excepted, the ASC will place an extension sticker on the back of the present card valid for up to a year to work and travel. The customer should receive the renewed I-551 card before the extension sticker expires.

The ASC's also do fingerprinting by appointment only. You

must have an appointment letter in order to appear for fingerprinting. Persons without a scheduled appointment from their local INS office can not be fingerprinted.

ASC locations:

INS-ASC (SE)
8505 Gulf Freeway
Houston, Texas 77017

INS-ASC (SW)
7086 Bissonnet
Houston, Texas 77074

INS-ASC (NW)
10555 NW FRWY
Houston, Texas 77092

ASC hours of operation:
Tue-Sat 8am-4pm.

**IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE
126 NORTHPOINT DRIVE
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77060**

Phone: 281-774-4721
Customer Service: 1-800-375-5283
Web Site: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov>

This publication is distributed by the Houston District Office Public Affairs Department and will be available monthly. This publication should include but is not limited to our monthly progress report, web site, phone numbers, contact names, brief explanations of INS processes and procedures. The intention of this publication is to keep your organization informed of INS related issues.

For more information check our web site at
www.ins.usdoj.gov