

U. S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20529



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

CO 703.1318

SEP 27 2007

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

I wanted to personally update you on U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) operations and new positions being deployed to Vermont.

As a result of the publication of the new Immigration Examinations Fee Account fee schedule on July 30, 2007, USCIS will be deploying almost 1,500 new federal positions during fiscal year (FY) 2008. These positions will enhance service delivery by providing more efficient and customer oriented immigration and naturalization benefits processing. Of these new positions, Vermont is targeted to receive approximately 300 federal positions to enhance its application and petition processing capability; and in addition, we are slated to have a higher complement of contractors to support those federal positions.

The additional positions were identified as needed through application of a sophisticated staffing allocation model (SAM) that was created to more analytically identify staffing needs within a particular office based upon current and projected future workloads. The staffing model was developed to ensure that resource allocation decisions are properly aligned with workload to prevent the occurrence of application and petition backlogs, while at the same time promoting an efficient and effective workforce balance. The staffing model provides the analytical capacity required to fairly and equitably identify resource needs to improve processing times and service delivery over time rather than, at best, perpetuating current staffing levels.

The additional resources specifically being provided to the Vermont Service Center are required to address the need to reduce waiting periods associated with the determination of benefits, as well as provide for the relevant training required to equip adjudications personnel with the requisite knowledge and skills to timely and accurately process the substantial and complex workloads that are administered through the Vermont Service Center. Additionally,

resources and positions will be going to support the Regional Office and for Mission Support Programs such as Contracting, Training, and Human Resources, as well.

Furthermore, 20 new Fraud Detection Immigration Officers will be deployed to Vermont to detect and combat immigration benefit fraud. Because the majority of immigration benefit fraud begins with the filing of an application or petition with USCIS, it is essential to identify suspect cases as early in the process as possible, ideally before the application or petition reaches an adjudicator for decision making, and, most certainly, before an applicant or beneficiary is accorded a benefit that will enable him or her to enter or stay in the United States.

Moreover, on August 1, 2007, the Office of Security and Integrity's Personnel Security Division was reorganized and a decision has been made to centralize all Federal and contractor suitability adjudication functions in Burlington, Vermont, to improve efficiencies and cycle time in the adjudication process¹. The current staff in Burlington consists of 6 Federal employees and 34 contractors. As a result of the recent reorganization, the Personnel Security Division will hire 25 additional Federal resources and 15 additional contractors assigned to the Burlington area. These new employees are expected to be on board by December 2007. The Office of Security and Integrity's Personnel Security Division provides the full range of personnel and industrial security services for all USCIS federal and contract employees including:

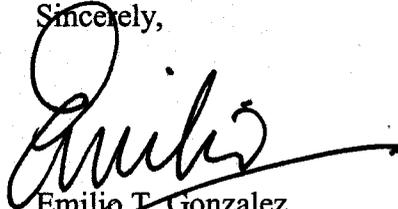
- Initiation and preliminary screening of all USCIS applicants for advanced security entry on duty (EOD) decisions based on favorable preliminary security screening.
- Identification and initiation of background investigations for Federal and contract employees, conduct periodic reinvestigations, and upgrade investigations for internal reassignments as well as for employees requiring access to National Security Information (NSI).
- Adjudication of cases to determine the suitability for USCIS employees to encumber public trust positions in accordance with applicable Federal laws, as well as Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Department of Homeland Security regulations, policies and procedures.

¹ A small Personnel and Industrial Security staff element, including 6 Federal employees and 6 contractors, is located in Washington DC to grant and certify clearances (secret, top secret and SCI) as well as conduct initial NSI briefings.

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I appreciate your continuing support for USCIS, and I look forward to working with you on future homeland security issues. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emilio T. Gonzalez", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Emilio T. Gonzalez
Director