

Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman
FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Government and Stakeholders – Finding Solutions Together

October 20, 2011

National Archives and Records Administration

Washington, D.C.

- 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **Registration**
- Ongoing **Meet the Ombudsman’s Staff**
The Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman’s Office) staff will be available to share information about case assistance and discuss previously issued recommendations and current projects.
- 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. **Welcome Remarks, United States Archivist David S. Ferriero**
Introductory Remarks, Ombudsman January Contreras
Keynote Remarks, Cecilia Munoz, White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
William McGowan Theater
- 10:00 – 10:15 a.m. **Transition Break**
- 10:15 – 12:00 p.m. **Simultaneous Roundtables – Session I**
Roundtable 1: The Importance of Adjudication Predictability: Impact on Employers, Individuals, and the Economy
Jefferson Room
Roundtable 2: Hot Topics in Asylum: An Examination of Particular Social Group and Other Serious Harm
Washington Room
Roundtable 3: I-601 Waivers of Inadmissibility: Does the Current Process Work? When is Hardship Extreme? Do Alternative Models Exist?
William McGowan Theater
- 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch** (on your own)
- 1:00 – 1:45 p.m. **Remarks from USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas**
William McGowan Theater
- 1:45 – 2:45 p.m. **The Role of Bloggers in Immigration Services**
William McGowan Theater
- 2:45 – 3:00 p.m. **Transition Break**
- 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. **Simultaneous Roundtables – Session II**
Roundtable 4: Improving Docket Efficiency through Better Communication and Coordination: Roles of USCIS, ICE, and EOIR
Jefferson Room
Roundtable 5: The SAVE Program: Verification, Immigrants, and Public Benefits
Washington Room
Roundtable 6: Demystifying the Visa Queues: An Interagency Discussion on Priority Dates, Retrogression, and Future Movement of the Visa Bulletin Cut-Off Dates
William McGowan Theater

Roundtables and Panels

10:15 – 12:00 **Simultaneous Roundtables – Session I**

Roundtable 1: The Importance of Adjudication Predictability: Impact on Employers, Individuals, and the Economy

Jefferson Room

Moderator: Frederick Troncone, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Amy Nice, *U.S. Chamber of Commerce*
Linda Rahal, *Trow and Rahal, P.C.*
Lynn Shotwell, *American Council on International Personnel*

This panel will share differing perspectives on recent USCIS employment-based adjudications, focusing particularly on predictability and consistency. The panel will also explore possible approaches the agency may consider to address these adjudication concerns and to improve overall stakeholder confidence.

Roundtable 2: Hot Topics in Asylum: An Examination of Particular Social Group and Other Serious Harm

Washington Room

Moderator: Rená Cutlip-Mason, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Chuck Adkins-Blanch, *EOIR Board of Immigration Appeals*
Pamela Goldberg, *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*
Karen Musalo, *Center for Gender and Refugee Studies*
Dorothea Lay, *USCIS Office of Chief Counsel*

This panel will cover important developments in asylum law including the changes in particular social group definitions and information on constructing a particular social group, as well as an examination of how practitioners can use “other serious harm” in claims for asylum.

Roundtable 3: I-601 Waivers of Inadmissibility: Does the Current Process Work? When is Hardship Extreme? Do Alternative Models Exist?

William McGowan Theater

Moderator: Peggy Gleason, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Anna Gallagher, *Maggio + Kattar*
Michael D. Olszak, *U.S. Customs and Border Protection Admissibility Review Office*
Pilar Peralta Mihalko, *USCIS Refugee Asylum and International Operations Directorate*

This panel will describe current standards and processes for adjudication of overseas I-601 waivers of inadmissibility and U.S.-filed waivers. The panel will discuss the challenges of the waiver process from government and stakeholder perspectives. Speakers will also cover an overview of the legal requirements for the waivers and describe recent changes.

1:15 – 1:45 **Remarks from USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas**

William McGowan Theater

1:45 – 2:45 **The Role of Bloggers in Immigration Services**

William McGowan Theater

Moderator: January Contreras, *Ombudsman for Citizenship and Immigration Services*

Panelists: Angelo Paparelli, *Nation of Immigrants*
Greg Siskind, *Immigration Law and Policy*
Jason Dzubow, *The Asylumist*
Eleanor Pelta, *AILA Leadership Blog*

This panel will explore how immigration bloggers have impacted the discussion of hot topics, informed the public, demystified immigration rhetoric, and advanced policy changes.

3:00 – 4:30 **Simultaneous Roundtables – Session II**

Roundtable 4: Improving Docket Efficiency through Better Communication and Coordination: Roles of USCIS, ICE, and EOIR

Jefferson Room

Moderator: Debra Rogers, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Judge Gary Smith, *Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR)*
Ellen Gallagher, *USCIS Office of Chief Counsel*
Michael Davis, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*

This panel will cover issues relating to EOIR docket efficiency, and attempts to resolve the challenges of high-volume caseloads through interagency partnerships.

Roundtable 5: The SAVE Program: Verification, Immigrants, and Public Benefits

Washington Room

Moderator: Wendy Kamenshine, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Pat Hatch, *Maryland Office of Refugee Affairs*
John Roessler, *USCIS Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE)*
Stephen Leak, *Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles*
Ellen Battistelli, *National Immigration Law Center*

This panel will discuss the most recent trends in the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program within their operations and how it has impacted immigrants applying for public benefits, employment, driver's licenses, and social security.

Roundtable 6: Demystifying the Visa Queues: An Interagency Discussion on Priority Dates, Retrogression, and Future Movement of the Visa Bulletin Cut-Off Dates

William McGowan Theater

Moderator: Gary Merson, *Ombudsman's Office*

Panelists: Charlie Oppenheim, *U.S. Department of State*
Sophia Cox, *USCIS Service Center Operations*
Vinay Singla, *USCIS Field Operations*
Charles Wheeler, *Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.*

This panel will look at trends in the Visa Bulletin for both employment and family-based categories. The panelists will also discuss how priority dates are established, how they may be retained when categories change, and how they are revoked under certain circumstances. Retrogression and its impact will also be discussed.