

NOTES FROM NEWARK DISTRICT USCIS MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2014.

Present from USCIS:

John Thompson, District Director (District 4, Newark); Randi Borgen Field Office Director; Gerry Yapaola, Chief of Staff, Nieves Carinale, District Director- Mt. Laurel Sub-Office; Lori Heinrich, Deputy Director Newark Asylum Office; Patricia Berry – Section Chief-Adjudications; Gina Pastore – Section Chief Naturalization; Paul Correia – Section Chief, Naturalization (New); Andreas Charalambous- Section Chief, Customer Service; Kelly Ayala – Community Service; Keith Dorr, Section Chief Adjudications, Mt. Laurel. Patrice Rodman and Kathy Hogan, USCIS Counsel.

In addition, several officers and Supervisors were present including Charles Pitt, Vickie Hunter-Walker, Solarte, Vanessa Jackson, Nicole Sheipp.

DD John Thompson spoke first and made introductions. He mentioned that plans for the Cafeteria are STILL up in the air, no timeline as to when a new Cafeteria will be in place in 970 Broad Street. Vending Machines were requested to be installed, that has not happened either? The DD and senior staff who moved from 16th fl to 11, they hope to be back up on 16 in April.

The Third Floor will be temporarily moving to the 11th floor while the 3rd is renovated sometime in the Summer. Mentioned there was an additional asbestos “incident” on the 16th Fl, but fortunately they were already moved out, so no one there.

We have a new Regional Director for USCIS. Phyllis Coven will be coming to be the new DD in NY. Lori Scialabba (from the BIA) is acting head Director of USCIS till they name a replacement.

PAROLE IN PLACE (PIP): Put in effect on November 15th. It provides parole for family of active duty and military veterans. I-131 filed with Special Projects unit (3rd floor), they are processing the applications within a few weeks, 30-45 days. No problems thus far.

PROCESSING TIMES:

Mt. Laurel: Natz is about 4 months to completion, 245 is 3.5 months! DD Cardinale reemphasized to AILA members that, if there is a problem on a case, or with an officer, to notify the supervisor or her immediately on the SAME day, and to not wait for days after to make a report or notification. They want to be aware of any issues as they occur.

Newark: Processing times are about 4 months on both N-400 and 245 to completion. Interview is being made in some cases as soon as just over 3 months!

Randi Borgen explained they have switched a few weeks ago to expanded appointment times, in hopes this will reduce waiting times. More time has been afforded to each interview. She noted that when correspondence or inquiries are made, attorneys should try to attach a G-28, even if already on record,

to illustrate they are atty, so they don't have to spend the time to verify this, before responding to inquiry. Very helpful.

Lori Heinrich from Asylum Office : Increase in Credible Fear interview, partly because they are being transferred more detainees from Texas. As a result, they had bad delays in scheduling Credible Fear interviews. Being resolved and waits should only be a couple of weeks. If problems contact the Asylum office by phone. 201-508-6100, Estella Carr handles scheduling. Reasonable Fear interviews take a little longer to schedule than Cred Fear.

Affirmative Asylum cases, are extremely backlogged, they have about 3,000 pending cases. Wait times for interview are out well more than a year!! Friday is inquiry day at the Asylum office. If you have an issue with this because clock is stopped, contact them or send client in on inquiry day. May be able to move up dates or get clock moving. Sometimes, if Credible fear not scheduled could be that ICE has not contacted them, so you should call Asylum anyway to let them know you are waiting for client to be scheduled. They are adding more officers so they expect to work off the backlogs slowly , but new applications will be processed much faster.

Questions were then addressed:

It was indicated that for inquiries to either 245 or Natz best method is now EMAIL and EMAIL is the preferred method according to Pat Berry. It is requested that attorneys who inquire attach to their email any and all pertinent documents to the inquiry, and if possible a G-28. This includes RESCHEDULE requests, best to send via email.

There is NO truth to recent rumors that interviews are being conducted without the attorney where a G-28 is on file and attorney has stepped out of room to attend to another matter. Things have not changed.

Stand Alone I-130s with an outstanding order: Case by case determination as to whether ICE will be consulted for possible arrest or processing.

Again reiterated that if a problem with an officer regarding how they conduct a case, or rudeness, attitude etc., a supervisor should be contacted IMMEDIATELY, not later.

If proceedings are terminated for Adjustment of Status good to notify 245 unit to get file in order for them to schedule interview.

FINGERPRINTING: If a MTR or Joint Motion or PD request and need to have fingerprinting for Office of Chief Counsel to process.... Need to have the Asst. Chief Counsel send an email to USCIS Supv requesting it and then make infopass to pay fee and process

If need to travel emergently and have expired green card, can file I-90, must wait to get receipt from USCIS then can go in and get expedite of fingerprints appt. Once fingerprinted then InfoPass can give

beneficiary a stamp for travel. However, cannot give stamp w/o fingerprints, and cannot give fingerprint appt w/o filing receipt from USCIS.

Naturalization:

Nothing much to report. If you have an issue regarding N-600s, Military related cases then contact Gina Pastore, she supervises those cases.

I-751s: Backlog on I-751 processing. Issuance of NTAs on denials, but also a bit slow.
Reminder there is a new I-290B going into effect in April. Be sure to use the new form.

After the meeting there was a discussion about a DMV liaison. We were advised that unless there is a specific mismatch of information, which can be resolved by USCIS, verification of status is done by DMV through the "SAVE" system. USCIS does not access the SAVE system, and therefore would not be helpful to resolve SAVE issues. We will have more information regarding this at our monthly meeting, and we are trying to get contact info from USCIS on whom to liaise with at DMV to discuss with us about these issues in verification at DMV.