

## MESSAGE FROM THE OMBUDSMAN



The Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman's 2007 Annual Report marks 46 months of cumulative analysis and recommendations since the establishment of the office. The Ombudsman's office is Congressionally-mandated to assist individuals and employers in resolving problems with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by advancing recommendations on improving USCIS services and operations. It is an independent DHS office that reports directly to the DHS Deputy Secretary with an annual report to Congress without prior review and comment by DHS or the executive branch, as directed by the Homeland Security Act of 2002.

The Ombudsman's first three annual reports focused on the systemic issues that caused delay in granting immigration benefits and customer service complaints. These reports identified pervasive and serious issues that were addressed in 28 formal recommendations directed at solving problems faced by individuals and employers in their interactions with USCIS. The USCIS Director and the Ombudsman generally agree on the identified problems and their need for priority attention, although the solutions proposed and those adopted by USCIS may differ.

Challenges still exist within USCIS. Customers continue to have difficulties with confusing forms and processes and many customers wait months, and perhaps years, for final adjudication of their cases. The Ombudsman will continue to assist individuals to receive lawful benefits in a timely, customer-friendly, secure, and efficient manner.

I want to thank DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, Deputy Secretary Michael P. Jackson, former Secretary Tom Ridge, former Deputy Secretary Jim Loy, former Deputy Secretary Gordon England, USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez, Deputy Director Jonathan "Jock" Scharfen, and former Director Eduardo Aguirre for their dedication to our mission of providing secure, efficient, and expeditious immigration services. I have been privileged to work with committed professionals in DHS, USCIS, and the Ombudsman's office.

The preparation of this annual report was accomplished by tireless efforts of a dedicated staff of professionals who spent many hundreds of hours reviewing and validating facts and figures, as well as drafting and editing the report. I thank them for assisting me in completing it and for their public service in addressing national security and customer service. I especially would like to thank Wendy Kamenshine who again this year skillfully managed this complicated project.

We have accomplished a great deal, but there is much more to do in the spirit of responsive government.

Prakash Khatri  
Citizenship & Immigration Services Ombudsman