



USCIS BUDGET CRISIS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

In May, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) notified Congress that the agency predicted a [budget shortfall](#) for the remainder of 2020, reportedly due to a lower volume of filings received during the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency requested a \$1.2 billion bailout from Congress and noted that, if it did not receive the money, it would furlough 13,000-plus people or nearly 70 percent of its workforce. Then, a congressional inquiry revealed a USCIS surplus for the fiscal year. USCIS ultimately canceled the scheduled furlough, but advised that—despite the fact that the furlough will not happen now—the agency will still institute [“aggressive spending reduction measures,” which will result in increased processing times.](#) USCIS further stated that it may not be able to avoid future furloughs without congressional intervention.

WHAT DOES USCIS DO?

USCIS is the agency within the Department of Homeland Security that oversees lawful immigration to the United States. It has nearly 20,000 employees and contractors at more than 200 offices worldwide. USCIS is a “fee funded” agency, meaning that its budget to operate is primarily based on filing fees. USCIS employees process and adjudicate applications for immigration benefits, including naturalization, asylum, green cards, and work authorization.

HOW DOES THIS BUDGET CRISIS AFFECT MY CASE?

USCIS indicates that its spending reduction measures will result in:

- Increased processing time for all case types
- Delays in receiving receipt notices, appointment notices, and other notice types from USCIS Lockboxes and Service Centers
- Increased wait time for pending case inquiries with the USCIS Contact Center
- Increased adjudication time for adjustment of status and naturalization cases

WHAT SHOULD I DO?



- Talk to your attorney to discuss strategies to ensure that you can file your case with USCIS as soon as you are eligible for the benefit, ahead of increased processing times. Understand that case processing delays may be outside of your attorney’s control.
- Review the [USCIS expedite criteria](#) to determine if your case is eligible for an expedite request.
- [Take action](#) to hold USCIS accountable by reaching out to your members of Congress to tell them about your situation. Ask them to support the bipartisan Case Backlog and Transparency Act of 2020 (H.R. 5971) to address crisis-level delays that are crippling the agency’s case processing and financial stability.