

# LitwinLaw Update

September 1, 2009

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- **2. State Dept. Introduces Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form** - The new DS-160 Web-based nonimmigrant visa application form is part of the Visa Office's effort to automate the visa process to the extent possible.
- **3. OMB Extends I-9 Approval to August 31, 2012** - Employers may use the I-9 with a revision date of either August 7, 2009, or February 2, 2009.
- **4. Seventh Circuit Affirms Time Limits on Labor Certifications** - The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit affirmed a Department of Labor amended regulation setting time limits on grants of labor certification.
- **5. State Dept. Announces Revised Exchange Visitor Skills List** - Exchange visitors who entered the U.S. on a J-1 visa before June 28, 2009, will continue to be governed by the 1997 Exchange Visitor Skills List, as amended, only if their country remains on the revised 2009 list.
- **6. Employment-Based Fourth Preference Categories Unavailable for September** - The employment fourth preference is expected to return to "Current" status in October, the first month of the new fiscal year.
- **7. USCIS Reopens FY 2009 H-2B Petition Filing Period** - The Department of State received far fewer than expected requests for H-2B visas and has announced that it will immediately accept new H-2B petitions.
- **8. USCIS Clarifies Regulatory Requirements for Filing H-2B Petitions by Certain Associations and Their Members** - USCIS said it has noticed a particular type of filing error, involving "master" petitions, in many H-2B petitions filed by certain associations on behalf of their members.
- **9. Visa Waiver Program Emergency/Temporary Passports Must Be Electronic, CBP Says** - All VWP emergency or temporary passports now must be e-Passports to be eligible for travel to the U.S. without a visa.
- **10. DHS Announces New Directives on Border Searches of Electronic Media** - DHS announced new directives to enhance and clarify oversight of computer and other electronic media searches at U.S. ports of entry.
- **11. USCIS Extends TPS Designation, Work Authorization for Somalians** - USCIS has extended the designation of Somalia for TPS for 18 months, through March 17, 2011.

- **12. State Dept. Updates Visa Medical Examination Forms** - Medical exams that have been completed using the older version of the forms do not have to be repeated.
- **13. USCIS Resumes Premium Processing for Nonimmigrant Religious Workers** - Only those petitioners who have successfully passed an on-site inspection are eligible to file under Premium Processing Service.
- **14. Tata America's Foreign Workers in U.S. Win Right To Court Hearing** - Tata's noncitizen U.S. employees had been required to sign over their federal and state tax refund checks to Tata.
- **15. Congress Examines Foreign Investment, Verification, Real ID Issues At Recent Hearings** - The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Regional Center Program is set to expire at the end of September; Sen. Leahy said that making the program permanent "is a critical first step to its continuing success."
- **16. International Educators Ask President To Restore Academic Travel To Cuba** - The letter cites the benefits of academic exchanges and notes that opportunities for Americans to study abroad in Cuba have declined precipitously.
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## Details...

### **1. DHS Proposes To Rescind Social Security No-Match Rule; SEVIS Data To Be Integrated Into E-Verify**

On August 19, 2009, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) proposed to rescind the amendments promulgated on August 15, 2007, and October 28, 2008, relating to procedures that employers may take to acquire a safe harbor from receipt of no-match letters. The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California had enjoined implementation of the 2007 final rule on October 10, 2007. After further review, DHS said it plans to focus its enforcement efforts relating to the employment of unauthorized workers on increased compliance through improved verification, including participation in E-Verify, the ICE Mutual Agreement Between Government and Employers (IMAGE), and other programs.

DHS noted that in fiscal year 2010, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services plans to improve the E-Verify system's ability to automatically verify international students and exchange visitors through the incorporation of ICE's Student and Exchange Visitors Information System (SEVIS) data into E-Verify. By incorporating SEVIS nonimmigrant student visa data into the automatic initial E-Verify check, the number of students and exchange visitors who receive initial mismatches should be reduced, DHS said. In 2010, ICE will launch a new version of SEVIS (SEVIS II), which will include employment eligibility information that E-Verify will be able to access

electronically. Currently, the SEVIS database is checked manually by immigration status verifiers after an initial mismatch occurs.

DHS's proposed rule is available at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-19826.pdf>.

## **2. State Dept. Introduces Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form**

The Department of State (DOS) recently posted a cable sent to consular offices introducing the new DS-160 Web-based nonimmigrant visa application form, which is part of the Visa Office's effort to automate the visa process to the extent possible. DOS noted that at least 12 posts currently require applicants to use the DS-160. The new form incorporates all of the current NIV forms (DS-156, 157, 158, 156K, 3032, and parts of the E visa application) into one interactive format, and allows applicants to upload a photo. It is hosted on the Consular Electronic Application Center, which eventually will host online immigrant visa and passport applications, online fee payments, "possible queuing systems," and an online appointment system.

When an applicant fills out and submits the form online, the cable noted, he or she receives a confirmation page with a barcode that allows consular officers to locate the applicant's case in the Consular Consolidated Database system and load it into the nonimmigrant visa system.

As noted above, 12 posts (including some Mexican and Canadian posts, Dublin, Hamilton, Hong Kong, and Tripoli) are requiring use of the DS-160 by their applicants. These posts' applicant volume makes up about a tenth of the worldwide NIV applicant workload, DOS noted. This summer, the agency is expanding DS-160 use to two additional posts in Mexico, as well as Australia. Current server capacity, however, does not allow DOS to expand DS-160 use more rapidly.

The form is available in English and Spanish, but translations into Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Serbian, and French are being developed. DOS hopes to have it available to all posts (and in the above languages) by the end of 2009.

The DOS cable is available at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams\\_4547.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_4547.html).

## **3. OMB Extends I-9 Approval to August 31, 2012**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced on August 27, 2009, that the Office of Management and Budget has extended its approval of Form I-9 (Employment Eligibility Verification Form) to August 31, 2012.

Consequently, USCIS has amended the form to reflect a new revision date of August 7, 2009.

Employers may use the I-9 with a revision date of either August 7, 2009, or February 2, 2009. The revision dates are located on the bottom right-hand portion of the form.

The announcement is available at

[http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/August%202009/update\\_I-9\\_extension0827.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/August%202009/update_I-9_extension0827.pdf).

#### **4. Seventh Circuit Affirms Time Limits on Labor Certifications**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit affirmed a Department of Labor amended regulation setting time limits on grants of labor certification. Specifically, the amended regulation states that an approved permanent labor certification granted on or after July 16, 2007, expires if not filed in support of an I-140 petition within 180 calendar days of the date the Department granted the certification, and that an approved permanent labor certification granted before July 16, 2007, expires if not filed in support of an I-140 petition within 180 calendar days of July 16, 2007.

Between March 2001 and May 2007, 14 unaffiliated Illinois businesses filed applications for labor certification on behalf of 15 potential employees. Thirteen were approved before the amended regulation took effect on July 16, 2007; the other two were approved after that date. After the Department of Homeland Security rejected eight of the workers' visa petitions because of expired labor certifications, the 14 businesses and 15 workers sued the Departments of Labor and Homeland Security. Among other things, the plaintiffs sought a judgment that the Department of Labor's promulgation of the amended regulation was beyond its authority or, alternatively, that retroactive application of the amended regulation was unlawful. The eight workers also sought a writ of mandamus against the Department of Homeland Security to compel the agency to process their visa petitions.

The Seventh Circuit ruled in favor of the government, noting among other things that when the Department of Labor amended its regulation to establish a 180-day time limit for previously approved labor certifications, the plaintiffs' right to the certifications' indefinite validity ended, and the plaintiffs did not possess any vested right that the amended regulation could impair.

The case is available at <http://adnet-nyc.com/Article/durable.pdf>.

## **5. State Dept. Announces Revised Exchange Visitor Skills List**

The Department of State (DOS) recently released a cable sent to consular posts announcing the revised 2009 J-1 Exchange Visitor Skills List. Exchange visitors who entered the U.S. on a J-1 visa before June 28, 2009, will continue to be governed by the 1997 Exchange Visitor Skills List, as amended, only if their country remains on the revised 2009 list. Exchange visitors whose countries were removed from the revised 2009 skills list are retroactively not subject to the two-year home residence requirement based on the Exchange Visitor Skills List, even if they entered the U.S. before the effective date.

The DOS cable is available at

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams\\_4548.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_4548.html). The revised list was published in the Federal Register at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-9657.pdf>.

## **6. Employment-Based Fourth Preference Categories Unavailable for September**

The Department of State's Visa Bulletin for September notes that heavy applicant demand for green card numbers in the employment fourth, and employment fourth "Certain Religious Worker," categories has resulted in their becoming "Unavailable" for September. This unavailable status took effect immediately in August because the annual limit for those categories was reached. Therefore, the Department said, no further requests for numbers in those categories can be processed during fiscal year 2009.

The employment fourth preference is expected to return to "Current" status in October, the first month of the new fiscal year. The employment fourth "Certain Religious Workers" category is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2009, and future availability will depend on legislative action.

The latest Visa bulletin is available at

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin\\_4558.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_4558.html).

## **7. USCIS Reopens FY 2009 H-2B Petition Filing Period**

On August 6, 2009, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reopened the fiscal year (FY) 2009 H-2B petition filing period and announced that it will immediately accept new H-2B petitions. The H-2B program allows U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the U.S. to fill temporary nonagricultural jobs for which there is a shortage of available U.S. workers. Typically, H-2B workers fill labor needs in occupational areas such as

education, construction, health care, landscaping, manufacturing, food service/processing, and resort/hospitality services.

Although on January 7, 2009, USCIS announced that it had accepted and approved a sufficient number of H-2B petitions to meet the congressionally mandated annual cap of 66,000, the Department of State received far fewer than expected requests for H-2B visas and, as a result, has issued only 40,640 H-2B visas for FY 2009 to date. This means that approximately 25,000 visas could go unused because they have not been granted. Because of the low visa issuance rate, USCIS is reopening the filing period to allow employers to file additional petitions for qualified H-2B temporary foreign nonagricultural workers.

The normal (non-premium processing) adjudication timeframe for H-2B petitions is 60 days. USCIS said it will make visa numbers available to petitions in the order in which the petitions are filed. However, because H-2B petitions (Forms I-129) for FY 2009 visas must be received, evaluated, and adjudicated by the FY 2009 deadline of September 30, 2009, USCIS said it cannot guarantee approval of any H-2B petition by that date. The agency therefore encourages employers to file as soon as possible and to request premium processing by filing a Form I-907 and submitting the \$1,000 premium processing fee, which will allow for expedited adjudication.

The USCIS notice, which includes instructions on how to qualify for a FY 2009 H-2B cap number, is available at [http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/August%202009/h-2b\\_petitions\\_fy09.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/August%202009/h-2b_petitions_fy09.pdf). A related Q&A is available at [http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/QA\\_USCIS\\_Reopens\\_H-2B\\_Filing.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/QA_USCIS_Reopens_H-2B_Filing.pdf). Information on how to use premium processing service is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=ebaf0c594dafd010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=54519c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>. A USCIS guide to hiring a foreign national for short-term employment in the U.S. is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/E1eng.pdf>.

## **8. USCIS Clarifies Regulatory Requirements for Filing H-2B Petitions by Certain Associations and Their Members**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued a clarification on August 28, 2009, to associations and their members of certain regulatory requirements for filing petitions for H-2B classification on behalf of foreign workers. USCIS said it has noticed a particular type of filing error in many H-2B petitions filed by certain associations on behalf of their members. Rather

than filing an individual petition with USCIS, some employers who are members of an association have sought H-2B non-agricultural workers via a "master" petition filed by their association.

USCIS noted that a "master" petition is a petition that:

- Is filed by an association (listing the association as petitioner) on behalf of several of its member-employers; and
- Includes multiple temporary labor certifications that have been issued by the Department of Labor (DOL) for each individual member-employer, rather than a single temporary labor certification certified for the particular association itself as an employer or "joint employer."

USCIS said it recognizes that the facts of each case may be different, but that association member-employers generally should file a petition for H-2B classification directly and separately (listing themselves as the petitioner) with USCIS, rather than through a "master" petition filed by an association (listing the association as the petitioner) on behalf of several of its members. Petitions filed by associations that fail to meet the petitioner requirements for H-2B classification will be denied, USCIS warned.

The clarification, which includes discussion and analysis of the reasons why H-2B petitions filed by associations on behalf of their employer members generally would not qualify for H-2B classification, is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Communications/Press%20Releases/FY%2009/August%202009/h2b-filed-by-associations.pdf>.

## **9. Visa Waiver Program Emergency/Temporary Passports Must Be Electronic, CBP Says**

All Visa Waiver Program (VWP) emergency or temporary passports now must be electronic passports (e-Passports) to be eligible for travel to the U.S. without a visa. This includes VWP applicants who present emergency or temporary passports to transit the U.S. An e-Passport contains an integrated chip that stores biographic data, a digitized photograph, and other information about the bearer, and is distinguished by a gold-colored symbol on the passport's front cover. VWP applicants arriving in the U.S. with a non-compliant passport may be required to undergo further processing and/or denied admission. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may exercise discretion at the ports of entry in cases of medical or other emergency travel.

The CBP notice, released July 14, 2009, contains additional country-by-country details and is available at

[http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id\\_visa/business\\_pleasure/vwp/epssprt\\_vwp.xml](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/business_pleasure/vwp/epssprt_vwp.xml).

## **10. DHS Announces New Directives on Border Searches of Electronic Media**

On August 27, 2009, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano announced new directives to enhance and clarify oversight of computer and other electronic media searches at U.S. ports of entry. The new directives address the circumstances under which U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can conduct border searches of electronic media consistent with the Department's authority to search other sensitive non-electronic materials, such as briefcases, backpacks and notebooks, at U.S. borders.

DHS said the new directives will also allow the agency "to develop automated, comprehensive data collection and analytic tools to facilitate accurate, thorough reporting on electronic media searched at the border, the outcomes of those searches and the nature of the data searched."

Between October 1, 2008, and August 11, 2009, CBP encountered more than 221 million travelers at U.S. ports of entry. Approximately 1,000 laptop searches were performed during that time. Of those, 46 were "in-depth."

Among other things, related CBP guidance issued on August 20, 2009, notes:

Officers may encounter materials that appear to be legal in nature, or an individual may assert that certain information is protected by attorney-client or attorney work product privilege. Legal materials are not necessarily exempt from a border search, but they may be subject to the following special handling procedures: If an Officer suspects that the content of such a material may constitute evidence of a crime or otherwise pertain to a determination within the jurisdiction of CBP, the Officer must seek advice from the CBP Associate/Assistant Chief Counsel before conducting a search of the material, and this consultation shall be noted in appropriate CBP systems of records. CBP counsel will coordinate with the U.S. Attorney's Office as appropriate.

Other possibly sensitive information, such as medical records and work-related information carried by journalists, shall be handled in accordance with any applicable federal law and CBP policy.

Officers encountering business or commercial information in electronic devices shall treat such information as business confidential

information and shall protect that information from unauthorized disclosure. Depending on the nature of the information presented, the Trade Secrets Act, the Privacy Act, and other laws, as well as CBP policies, may govern or restrict the handling of the information. Any questions regarding the handling of business or commercial information may be directed to the CBP Associate/Assistant Chief Counsel.

Information that is determined to be protected by law as privileged or sensitive will only be shared with federal agencies that have mechanisms in place to protect appropriately such information.

The CBP guidance also notes that an officer at the border may "detain" electronic devices or copies of information contained in them for "a reasonable period of time to perform a thorough border search," which may take place either on-site or at another location. The guidance states that unless extenuating circumstances exist, the detention of such devices ordinarily should not exceed five days and should be completed "as expeditiously as possible." Supervisory approval is required for detaining electronic devices, or copies of information contained in them, for continuation of a border search after an individual's departure. Port Director, Patrol Agent in Charge, or other equivalent level manager approval is required to extend any such detention beyond five days.

The DHS notice and CBP guidance are available at <http://www.aila.org/content/default.aspx?docid=29899>.

## **11. USCIS Extends TPS Designation, Work Authorization for Somalians**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has extended the designation of Somalia for temporary protected status (TPS) for 18 months, from its current expiration date of September 17, 2009, through March 17, 2011. USCIS also automatically extended the validity of employment authorization documents (EADs) issued under the TPS designation of Somalia for six months, through March 17, 2010, to give re-registrants sufficient time to receive their new EADs after their current EADs expire.

The USCIS notice sets forth procedures necessary for nationals of Somalia, or those having no nationality who last habitually resided in Somalia) to re-register with USCIS for TPS. Re-registration is limited to persons who previously registered for TPS under the designation of Somalia and whose applications have been granted by, or remain pending with, USCIS. The 60-day re-registration period began on July 27, 2009, and will remain in effect until September 25, 2009.

The notice is available at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-17862.pdf>. A related Q&A is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=7862cb29f99b2210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

## **12. State Dept. Updates Visa Medical Examination Forms**

Updated visa medical forms are now being used. The forms are:

- DS-2053 - Medical Examination for Immigrant or Refugee Applicant (1991 TB TIs)
- DS-2054 - Medical Examination for Immigrant or Refugee Applicant (2007 TB TIs)
- DS-3024 - Chest X-Ray and Classification Worksheet (1991 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Technical Instructions (TIs) on tuberculosis (TB))
- DS-3030 - Chest X-Ray and Classification Worksheet (2007 TB TIs)
- DS-3026 - Medical History of Physical Examination Worksheet (all posts), and
- DS-3025 - Vaccination Documentation Worksheet (all posts).

The Department of State recently released a cable sent to consular posts listing the forms and noting that all posts should begin using the DS-2053, DS-3024, DS-3026, and DS-3025 forms immediately, and discontinue use of any older version of these forms. Medical exams that have been completed using the older version of the forms, however, do not have to be repeated.

The cable is available at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams\\_4550.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_4550.html). Related information from the CDC, including CDC global TB control activities for U.S. immigration and TIs for TB screening and treatment, is available at [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/panel\\_2007.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/panel_2007.htm). Other CDC information on proposed vaccination criteria for U.S. immigration, and guidelines for medical examination of immigrants, is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dq/refugee/index.htm>.

### **13. USCIS Resumes Premium Processing for Nonimmigrant Religious Workers**

After a suspension of several years, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that it has resumed premium processing service for nonimmigrant religious worker petitions filed by certain R-1 petitioners. Only those petitioners who have successfully passed an on-site inspection are eligible to file under premium processing service. Under premium processing service, USCIS guarantees petitioners that, for a \$1,000 processing fee, within 15 calendar days of receipt it will issue either an approval notice or, where appropriate, a denial notice, a notice of intent to deny, or a request for evidence, or will open an investigation for fraud or misrepresentation.

The notice is available at

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=8b3dcb29f99b2210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>. A related Q&A is available at

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=3f4ecb29f99b2210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

Information on how to use premium processing service is available at

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=ebaf0c594dafd010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=54519c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>.

### **14. Tata America's Foreign Workers in U.S. Win Right To Court Hearing**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has denied Tata America International Corp.'s attempt to compel arbitration in Mumbai, India, and dismiss a class action by Tata's noncitizen U.S. employees, who had been required to sign over their federal and state tax refund checks to Tata. The suit, *Vedachalan v. Tata America International Corp.*, included a proposed class of thousands of current and former noncitizen U.S. employees of Tata working in the U.S.

According to plaintiffs' representative Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP, the complaint claims that Tata has paid its employees less than promised; has failed to pay its employees overtime pay and has misclassified them as exempt from overtime; and has failed to compensate employees for earned but unused vacation pay. The complaint also alleges that Tata required its noncitizen U.S. employees to sign power of attorney agreements delegating an outside agency to calculate and submit each

employee's tax return to state and federal authorities. Tata then required its noncitizen employees who received tax refunds from state and federal tax authorities to endorse the tax refund checks and send them to Tata.

A press release announcing the ruling is available at [http://www.lieffcabraser.com/press\\_releases/20090731-lawsuit-against-tata.htm](http://www.lieffcabraser.com/press_releases/20090731-lawsuit-against-tata.htm), and the decision is available at <http://www.lieffcabraser.com/pdf/20090730-tata-order.pdf>. Additional information on the lawsuit and related links are available at <http://www.lieffcabraser.com/lawsuitagainsttata.htm>.

## **15. Congress Examines Foreign Investment, Verification, Real ID Issues At Recent Hearings**

The Senate and House recently held hearings on various employment-based immigration issues:

- The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on July 22, 2009, "Promoting Job Creation and Foreign Investment in the United States: An Assessment of the EB-5 Regional Center Program." Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) noted in his opening statement that the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Regional Center Program is set to expire at the end of September, and that making the program permanent "is a critical first step to its continuing success." Sen. Leahy noted that the program "has been responsible for the investment of hundreds of millions of dollars, and the creation of tens of thousands of jobs in American communities since 1993. The program has paved the way for ski resort expansion in Vermont, dairy operations in Iowa, energy development in Oklahoma and Texas, and the manufacture of hurricane-resistant housing in Alabama. These are just a few examples of projects financed by foreign investment through the Regional Center program, and all indications are that interest in the program is growing." Witnesses at the hearing included Michael Dougherty, Robert Kruszka, Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers member Stephen Yale-Loehr, William Stenger, and Ron Drinkard. Their testimony, and Sen. Leahy's statement, are available at <http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=3998>.
- The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on July 20, 2009, "Time Change - Ensuring a Legal Workforce: What Changes Should Be Made To Our Current Employment Verification System?" Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) said in his opening statement that he is concerned about recent efforts to make E-Verify mandatory and to expand its use to federal contractors "without first fixing the current problems with the system." He noted that according to a 2006 report by the Social

Security Administration's Inspector General, "the data set on which E-Verify relied contains errors in 17.8 million records, affecting 12.7 million U.S. citizens. If E-Verify becomes mandatory before these errors are fixed, millions of Americans could be misidentified as unauthorized to work." Witnesses at the hearing included Rep. Luis Gutierrez, Michael Aytes, James Ziglar, and Lynden Melmed. Their testimony, and Sen. Feingold's statement, are available at <http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=3982>.

- The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs held a hearing on July 15, 2009, "Identification Security: Reevaluating the Real ID Act." Witnesses at the hearing included Janet Napolitano, Jim Douglas, Stewart Baker, Leroy Baca, David Quam, and Ari Schwartz. Their testimony, and committee member statements, are available at [http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing\\_ID=3d9a52cd-c442-4dee-9a1f-b02ed3b38000](http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_ID=3d9a52cd-c442-4dee-9a1f-b02ed3b38000).

The House of Representatives' Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing on July 23, 2009, "E-Verify: Challenges and Opportunities." Witnesses at the hearing included Angelo Amador, David Rust, Gerri Ratliff, and Jena Baker McNeill. Their testimony is available at <http://governmentmanagement.oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2552>.

## **16. International Educators Ask President To Restore Academic Travel To Cuba**

NAFSA: Association of International Educators, along with a group of 17 organizations, sent a letter on July 22, 2009, to President Obama urging him to remove restrictions on academic travel to Cuba. The letter cites the benefits of academic exchanges and notes that opportunities for Americans to study abroad in Cuba have declined precipitously since the Bush administration imposed restrictions on academic travel to Cuba in 2004. NAFSA noted that 220 American college students studied in Cuba during the 2006-2007 academic year; three years earlier, 10 times as many students had done so. The letter also supports granting U.S. visas to Cubans coming to the U.S. for exchange purposes, and a policy favoring academic, cultural, religious, sports, and professional visits. The letter further urges Cuban authorities to grant exit visas for students and scholars accepted by U.S. academic institutions.

The letter is available at [http://www.nafsa.org/\\_/File/\\_/POTUS\\_Cuba\\_July\\_09.pdf](http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/POTUS_Cuba_July_09.pdf).

## Government Agency Links

*Follow these links to access current processing times of the USCIS Service Centers and the Department of Labor, or the Department of State's latest Visa Bulletin with the most recent cut-off dates for visa numbers:*

USCIS Service Center processing times online:

<https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/processTimesDisplay.do>

Department of Labor processing times and information on backlogs:

<http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/times.cfm>

Department of State Visa Bulletin:

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin\\_1360.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html)

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