



Testimony
of

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before the

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security

on

“Oversight of the Department of Homeland Security: ICE, CBP, and USCIS”

February 10, 2026
Washington, DC

Chairman Garbarino, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am here to discuss the progress, priorities, and challenges of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It is an honor to testify before this esteemed Committee, and I appreciate your continued commitment as we work together to protect American citizens, safeguard the homeland, and uphold the rule of law.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to President Trump for the trust he has placed in me to lead USCIS, and to Secretary Noem for her leadership at the Department of Homeland Security. I am proud to serve alongside a dedicated workforce committed to advancing the President's agenda, protecting our Nation and the safety of our communities, and restoring integrity to America's legal immigration system.

As Director of USCIS, my vision has been clear: to restore accountability and security to our legal immigration system, ensuring that it serves the interests of the American people above all else. Over the past year, USCIS has made historic strides in advancing this mission. Today, I will highlight our major accomplishments in six critical areas: combating fraud, ending the exploitation of immigration programs, upholding the integrity of the naturalization process, putting American communities and workers first, implementing the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, and protecting our communities from threats to public safety and national security.

Combating Fraud

At the heart of our mission is the unwavering commitment to protect the integrity of the legal immigration system from those who seek to exploit, abuse, or undermine it. Fraud is a national security and public safety concern because its often through fraud that many of those who wish to do us harm have accessed the United States. Over the past year, USCIS has implemented rigorous measures to detect, deter, and disrupt fraud at every stage of the immigration process.

Since January 20, 2025, USCIS officers have made nearly 33,000 fraud referrals to our Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate— a 138% increase compared to the average yearly referrals of the previous administration. Our Fraud Detection and National Security team completed investigations into more than 21,000 cases, identifying fraud in 65% of them. Our officers conducted over 7,000 site visits and more than 26,000 social media checks to identify national security, public safety, fraud, and anti-American concerns.

This year, USCIS made history with Operation Twin Shield. Launched in the Minneapolis–St. Paul area, this targeted initiative uncovered a wide range of fraudulent schemes, including marriage fraud, misuse of H-1B work visas, and student visa abuses. Operation Twin Shield focused on more than 1,000 cases with fraud or ineligibility indicators, attempted over 2,000 site visits, and completed nearly 1,500 in-person interviews. The operation resulted in the denial of immigration benefits, the filing of numerous Notices to Appear before an immigration judge to initiate removal proceedings, and nearly a dozen arrests by our partners at U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE). We also gained significant evidence that led to Operation PARRIS (Post-Admission Refugee Reverification and Integrity Strengthening) in Minnesota.

Operation PARRIS is a sweeping initiative reexamining thousands of refugee cases through new background checks and intensive verification of refugee claims. We have referred cases of fraud and other crimes to ICE. The initial focus is on Minnesota's 5,600 refugees who have not yet been granted lawful permanent resident status (Green Card holders). USCIS' newly established vetting center is at the forefront of Operation PARRIS, with adjudicators conducting thorough background checks, reinterviews, and merit reviews of refugee claims.

In the last year, USCIS also strengthened policy guidance to ensure that there is no legal defense if someone falsely claims U.S. citizenship to gain a government benefit, with officers considering only age or mental capacity to assess if a claim was made intentionally. Such false claims historically and routinely allow aliens unlawful access to benefits, services, and privileges reserved for American citizens, and we are committed to holding violators accountable. Lying about being a U.S. citizen, including attempting to fraudulently vote in elections, is a clear violation of the INA¹ and will lead to the denial of a naturalization application and the alien's immigration status. We also enhanced screening measures to vet potentially fraudulent marriages and family relationships, ensuring they are genuine, verifiable, and compliant with all applicable laws. Aliens seeking legal immigration status through family relationships or marriage must prove their relationship is genuine and not a scheme to commit immigration fraud.

Additionally, we changed regulations to ensure that aliens no longer receive automatic extensions of employment authorization when seeking to renew that authorization in some employment categories. This ensures that the U.S. Government doesn't allow aliens to work in the U.S. without regular, ongoing screening and vetting. We also reduced the maximum period that certain employment authorization documents are valid — from five years to eighteen months, ensuring more frequent vetting and screening.

Ending the Exploitation of Immigration Programs

USCIS has taken decisive action to end the abuse and exploitation of immigration programs, restoring them to their intended purpose as prescribed by Congress. This includes stopping the broad abuse of humanitarian parole authority and terminating the so-called "family reunification" and the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) parole programs.

¹ A false claim to U.S. citizenship is a ground of inadmissibility under INA § 212(a)(6)(C)(ii) and a ground of removability under INA § 237(a)(3)(D), and generally, there is no waiver available.

Parole was never designed to be used as a blanket authority, and we are returning it to the case-by-case basis for only urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit Congress intended.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) was always meant to be temporary. Secretary Noem has taken her statutory duties seriously and has ended TPS for many countries, restoring the long-ignored Congressional intent of this classification. We strongly encourage aliens whose parole or TPS was terminated to use the CBP Home app to self-report their departure from the United States. Doing so will enable them to receive a complimentary one-way ticket home and a \$2,600 exit bonus to help them get resettled.

Not only were CHNV and TPS never intended to be permanent pathways to citizenship, but they were easily exploited by bad actors. Individuals with criminal records, including those with links to terrorism and human trafficking, obtained status via CHNV and TPS through fraudulent applications and submission of fake documents, including through the filing of Form I-134A (Online Request to be a Supporter and Declaration of Financial Support) associated with CHNV sponsorship applications that identified over 600,000 supporter applications with suspected fraud and public safety concerns involving hundreds of fictitious addresses, fraudulent identities and social security number belonging to deceased individuals, exposing the American people to dangerous threats within our borders. Returning these programs to their statutory intent reduces this risk of exploitation and unacceptable risk to our citizens.

These actions reinforce our commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring that immigration programs are not exploited for purposes beyond their statutory intent.

Upholding the Integrity of the Naturalization Process

Naturalization is a privilege, not a right, and USCIS has taken extensive steps to reinforce the integrity of the naturalization process. On September 17, 2025, we announced a revised version of the civics portion of the naturalization test, expanding the total bank of questions from 100 to 128 questions, increasing the number of questions on each test from 10 to 20, raising the passing score from 6 to 12 correct responses, and revising the questions to provide a more meaningful assessment of an alien's knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government.

We also restored the practice of conducting neighborhood investigations of those seeking citizenship. This is an authority provided for in statute, but long neglected in practice. These investigations verify aliens' eligibility for naturalization by reviewing actual residency, moral character, loyalty to the U.S. Constitution, ensuring they have not falsely claimed U.S. citizenship to obtain an unlawful benefit or registered to vote, and their commitment to the nation's well-being. Neighborhood investigations are vital to maintaining the integrity of the naturalization process, assuring proper assimilation into American values and culture, and safeguarding the value and privilege of American citizenship.

We have also ensured that voter registration services offered at administrative naturalization ceremonies remain strictly nonpartisan and are conducted only by state and local election officials. This practice safeguards the impartiality of voter registration for America's newest citizens.

Putting American Communities and Workers First

USCIS is committed to putting American communities and workers first, ensuring that our immigration system serves the national interest and protects the rights and opportunities of American citizens first and foremost.

We have launched enhancements to the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements service, better known as SAVE, allowing states to verify citizenship using the last four digits of Social Security numbers. States can run queries in bulk and use SAVE at no charge. By allowing states to review and verify their voter rolls, this administration is doing more to ensure the integrity of elections than any previous administration. Since January 20, 2025, SAVE has processed over 58 million voter verification queries, with 27 states signing memoranda of agreement for voter verification with USCIS.

Moreover, we are cracking down on the abuse of public benefits. On September 4, 2025, USCIS reaffirmed long-standing policy that aliens in the United States should be self-reliant, and that government benefits should not incentivize immigration. On September 25, 2025, we reminded individuals who agree to financially sponsor an alien that they can be sued to recover the cost of any benefits accessed by an alien whom they sponsor.

Additionally, DHS proposed a rule to rescind the ineffective 2022 Public Charge final rule and restore USCIS' discretion when making a determination whether an alien seeking legal status in the United States would become reliant upon government assistance. To further preserve public benefits for U.S. citizens who need them and to identify potential fraud in public benefits programs, federal agencies responsible for providing oversight to benefit-granting agencies ran nearly 206 million SAVE queries during Calendar Year 2025.

Another rule that DHS proposed prioritizes the allocation of the limited number of H-1B visas to higher-skilled and higher-paid aliens, better protecting wages, working conditions, and job opportunities for American workers while also ensuring American employers can access the best of the best foreign workers. We also published a critical final rule enabling USCIS to streamline the process for agricultural work visas, supporting America's vital agricultural industry.

Implementing the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act into law, adding new provisions and fees to the Immigration and Nationality Act. USCIS did not receive appropriations from the bill, but through the implementation of new immigration fees, \$321 million has been collected – of which USCIS retains only a small portion. The revenue generated

from immigration fees under the bill is allocated to USCIS; the Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR); the U.S. Treasury; U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). However, USCIS does not collect or track the revenue for CBP or ICE. USCIS moved quickly to implement the new fees that the agency is responsible for, publishing the July 22, 2025 Federal Register Notice approximately 2 weeks after the President signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act into law. USCIS has since published several Federal Register Notices announcing the implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act fees.

The bill introduced fees between \$100 to \$1,000 for specific USCIS benefit requests with limited exceptions. Congress designated portions of each fee to specific government entities, with USCIS retaining only 26%, and the remainder allocated to the United States Treasury. Fees mandated by the bill are non-waivable and non-reducible, regardless of eligibility for waivers under other USCIS regulations. The law requires DHS to make annual adjustments based on the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers to ensure fees reflect inflation and economic conditions. On January 1, 2026, USCIS implemented inflation-adjusted fees, in compliance with the law.

We also updated our policies, guidance, and intake procedures to close loopholes, limit improper fee waivers, and ensure applications that do not comply with the law are rejected. These critical efforts have strengthened the integrity of our legal immigration system, reinforced accountability, and ensured that USCIS resources are directed toward lawful, properly filed cases. Under this administration, USCIS is once again enforcing the law as written: firmly, consistently, and with integrity. I'm proud of the professionalism and discipline our workforce has shown in carrying out Congress's mandate.

Protecting American Communities from Threats to Public Safety and National Security

Protecting Americans is at the heart of everything we do at USCIS. We are committed to safeguarding public safety and national security by ensuring that every alien undergoes the most rigorous vetting and screening processes possible.

Within hours of the November 26, 2025 attack where an Afghan national allegedly murdered a National Guard member and severely wounded another in Washington, D.C., Secretary Noem directed USCIS to put asylum processing on hold for aliens from every country, implement a full-scale re-review of immigration benefits approved for aliens from Presidentially-designated high-risk countries for the last several years, and place a hold on the processing of immigration applications and petitions for Afghan nationals and aliens from those additional countries of concern.

We implemented critical national security measures requiring USCIS officers to consider negative country-specific factors when vetting aliens from 39 high-risk countries, ensuring that

USCIS can more meaningfully assess whether an alien is potentially a threat to public safety or national security.

With the support of Secretary Noem, USCIS announced the creation of a new vetting center to enhance screening and vetting of immigration applications, with resources that allow us to better focus on identifying terrorists, criminal aliens, and other threats to public safety. The center leverages advanced technologies and works closely with law enforcement and intelligence partners to strengthen our ability to protect national security.

USCIS has referred over 14,400 aliens to ICE since January 20, 2025, for public safety, national security, and fraud concerns, including 182 aliens who were confirmed or suspected to be national security risks. We have actively collaborated with other agencies on immigration enforcement and public safety efforts, resulting in over 2,400 arrests at USCIS field offices since January 20, 2025.

USCIS has begun recruiting a new class of immigration officers called Homeland Defenders to better support the agency's mission and bolster efforts to combat fraud and other threats. Since launching the hiring campaign on September 30, USCIS has received more than 50,000 applications—the highest in agency history. The first Homeland Defenders began reporting for duty in early December 2025.

USCIS is also exercising new law enforcement authorities delegated by Secretary Noem and is hiring a new team of special agents who will investigate and refer immigration law violators for prosecution.

Additionally, under an updated policy confirming USCIS' role as an immigration enforcement agency, our immigration officers are once again empowered to enforce immigration law by issuing Notices to Appear before an immigration judge to initiate removal proceedings, and they have done so in historic numbers. Since January 20, 2025, USCIS officers have issued approximately 196,600 Notices to Appear.

USCIS has aligned immigration policy with our deeply held American values, issuing policy guidance emphasizing that there is no room in America for aliens who espouse anti-American ideologies or support terrorist organizations.

We have also launched an online process for aliens to comply with a longstanding alien registration requirement that helps the government track and manage their presence to more effectively enforce immigration law, supporting national security and public safety efforts.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to reiterate my commitment—and the commitment of every USCIS employee—to restoring integrity, accountability, and security to America's legal immigration system. The accomplishments of the past year reflect the hard work and dedication of our

workforce, the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Noem, and our shared commitment to putting the interests of the American people first.

USCIS stands ready to continue working with Congress and our partners across government to protect the homeland, uphold the rule of law, and ensure that our legal immigration system serves the nation's interests. I thank the Committee for its attention to our shared mission and for its ongoing support of USCIS.

I welcome your questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.