



## Immigration ADVISORY ■

**MARCH 30, 2022**

### USCIS Takes Action to Reduce Excessive Backlogs in Immigration Case Processing

Yesterday, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [announced](#) three new efforts to increase efficiency and reduce excessive backlogs in processing immigration petitions. This is a much-welcomed reprieve to U.S. employers and applicants who have experienced astronomical delays in USCIS's processing of applications for extensions of status and work permits since the start of the pandemic. Employers will be able to premium-process (an expedited service for which there is an additional fee) more categories of work-based visa petitions, and the processing times for several applications should shrink markedly (processing times have stretched from over eight months to up to 24 months or more for some work-based petitions and applications for work authorization).

#### 1. Reducing Processing Backlogs

USCIS has set new internal cycle times:

NEW CYCLE TIME GOALS		
2 WEEKS	6 MONTHS	
I-129 Premium	N-400	I-526
I-140 Premium	N-600	I-600
2 MONTHS	N-600K	I-600A
I-129 Non-Premium	I-485	I-600K
3 MONTHS	I-140 Non-Premium	I-730
I-765	I-130 Immediate Relative	I-800
I-131 Advance Parole	I-129F Fiancé(e)	I-800A
I-539	I-290B	I-90
I-824	I-360	I-821D Renewals
	I-102	

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These goals will serve as a guide for USCIS officers to help reduce the current backlog with the goal of faster adjudications. USCIS promises to increase capacity, improve technology, and expand staffing to achieve these new results by the end of FY 2023.

## **2. Expanding Premium Processing**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has also announced a final rule codifying premium processing fees and adjudication timeframes. The final rule will expand the categories of forms eligible for premium processing. Eligible categories will now include Application for Employment Authorization (Form I-765), Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (Form I-539), and some I-140 classifications (multinational manager filings and members of professions with advanced degrees or exceptional ability seeking a national interest waiver).

USCIS will implement the expansion of premium processing services in a phased approach, while ensuring that these expanded services will not negatively impact the processing times for other immigration requests.

## **3. Improving Access to Employment Authorization Documents**

USCIS has been streamlining employment authorization document (EAD) processes, including expediting renewals for health care and childcare workers, and extending the validity periods for certain EADs. USCIS is still working on a [temporary final rule](#) meant to augment these initiatives and to avoid lapses in work authorization.

We will continue to monitor these developments and keep you apprised of further changes.

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If you have any questions or would like additional information, please visit our [Immigration Team](#) or contact any of the following:

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