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Description of document: Records Concerning the Unnecessary Mass Referral of FOIA Requests from Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to the Department of State, 2010

Released date: 29-January-2013

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Source of document: Office of Information Programs and Services
A/GIS/IPS/RL
U. S. Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20522-8100
Fax: 202-261-8579
[Online Electronic FOIA Request](#)

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United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

JAN 29 2013

Case No. F-2012-27764
Segment: RRT

I refer to our letter dated December 3, 2012 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

The search of the records of the Office of the Rapid Response Team has been completed and has resulted in the retrieval of 22 documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that 17 may be released in full and four may be released with excisions. All released material is enclosed.

A decision on the one remaining document requires interagency cooperation. It has been forwarded to another agency for review and direct reply to you.

Subsection (b)(5) of the Freedom of Information Act exempts from disclosure inter-agency or intra-agency communications containing deliberative process, attorney-client, or attorney work product information. The information in the excised portions of the documents released in part is exempt from release under subsection (b)(5) because it consists of pre-decisional deliberative process material, and /or material protected under the attorney-client or attorney work product privileges.

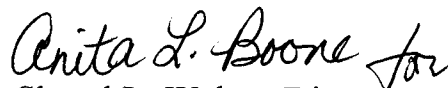
With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have determined that a search of the Office of Legal Advisor was unnecessary based on the material we have retrieved.

The Freedom of Information Act provides for the recovery of the direct costs of searching for and duplicating records requested for non-commercial use. However, no fee is charged for the first two hours of search time or for the first one hundred pages of duplication. Since less than two hours of search time have been expended and fewer than one hundred pages have been duplicated in this case, your request has been processed without charge to you.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anita L. Boone for".

Sheryl L. Walter, Director
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:
As stated.

Rules and Regulations

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

- (a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.
- (b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, ~~AVGIS/PS/PP/EC~~, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.
- (c) *Time Limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.
- (d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefor. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

www.state.gov

September 14, 2010

Ms. Mary Ellen Callahan
Chief FOIA Officer
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
The Privacy Office
245 Murray Drive SW, Building 410
STOP-0550
Washington, DC 20528-0550

RELEASED IN FULL

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

Dear Ms. Callahan:

As you know, USCIS recently began to refer records contained in alien files to the Department of State for a decision on their release under the FOIA. It has come to our attention that these records are primarily immigrant visa applications and supporting documents that do not require referral to, or review by, the Department. In an effort to minimize the number of unnecessary referrals and to conserve scarce FOIA processing resources at both the Department of State and USCIS, this letter provides guidance on the scope of documents that require our review.

Although many of the immigrant visa records recently referred to us bear the Department of State name and seal, they are not, in fact, records of the Department of State. As a matter of policy, U.S. embassies and consulates do not retain paper copies of approved immigrant visa applications or supporting documents because the Department of State has no jurisdiction over lawful permanent residents. Instead, those documents are returned to the visa applicant in a sealed envelope, which the applicant presents to a U.S. immigration officer at the port of entry. The approved immigrant visa application and supporting documents become part of the alien file over which USCIS retains disposition authority. In light of these circumstances, we have no need to review approved immigrant visa applications and supporting documents contained in alien files.

-2-

Similarly, we have no need to review other documents that USCIS recently referred to us, including alien registration forms, petitions, affidavits of support, certificates of birth or death, statements of acknowledgment signed by an applicant, immigrant data summary documents, entry stamps, nonimmigrant visas, border-crossing cards, I-94 arrival and departure forms, certificates of eligibility for exchange visitor status, letters to applicants, transportation letters, voluntary departure bonds, non-substantive materials such as cover sheets and receipts, medical records in A-files, scheduling steps in visa process in A-files, and third-party U.S. passports.

We ask that USCIS continue to refer any Department of State documents that may be subject to the confidentiality requirements of section 222(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1202(f)). That statute provides, in pertinent part, that records of the Department of State pertaining to the issuance or refusal of a visa shall be confidential. Records that typically require review under Section 222(f) include Department of State cables, emails, and memoranda pertaining to the issuance or refusal of a visa; non-immigrant visa applications; embassy or consulate visa fraud investigation documents; police reports; visa refusal worksheets; paper copies of documents generated by Department of State electronic databases (e.g., a "report 24," "NIV Applicant Summary," and "NIV Applicant Detail"); asylum-related documents including interagency communications and advisory opinions; and records in interagency databases such as TECS that originated with the Department of State.

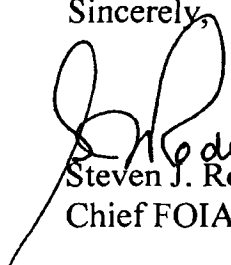
The enclosed chart provides a full description of the categories of documents that USCIS should not refer to the Department for review. It also lists examples of documents that do require referral to the Department for review under 222(f).

We look forward to working with DHS to implement this guidance as USCIS processes future FOIA requests. We believe this approach will eliminate the need to refer approximately 85 percent of the material that was recently referred to us. It will also enable you to release many documents in full and to complete the processing of requests with no more effort than it takes to refer cases to us.

-3-

Please contact Alex Galovich, Deputy Director, Office of Information Programs and Services, at (202) 261-8328 if you have any questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Rodriguez
Chief FOIA Officer

Enclosure:
As stated.

cc: Ms. Tracy Bellisime
Assistant Center Director

Ms. Jill Eggleston
FOIA Officer

RELEASED IN FULL

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

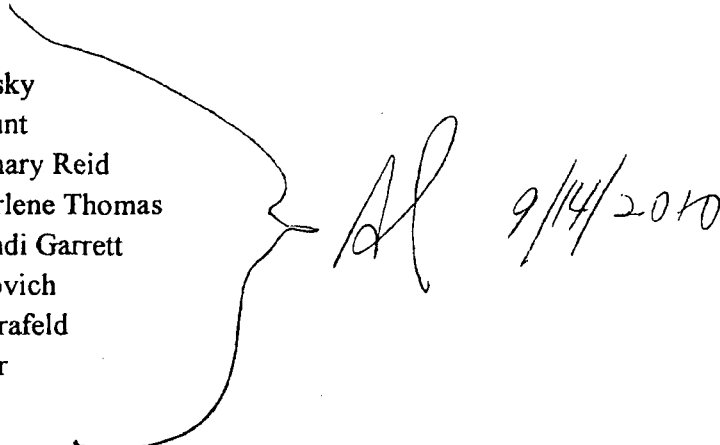
FUTURE USCIS REFERRALS: WHAT STATE NEEDS TO REVIEW

State Needs to Review	State Does Not Need to Review
<p>State Department messages (letters, emails, checklists, cables, etc.) pertaining to visa determinations</p> <p>Non-Immigrant visa (NIV) applications</p> <p>Embassy/Consulate fraud investigations</p> <p>Police reports</p> <p>Refusal worksheets</p> <p>Asylum-related documents (interagency communications, advisory opinions, etc.)</p> <p>State electronic databases (NIV Applicant Summary, NIV Applicant Detail, etc.)</p> <p>Records in interagency electronic databases (TECS, etc.) that originated with the State Department</p>	<p>Immigrant visa and alien registrations</p> <p>Immigrant visa (IV) applications</p> <p>Petitions</p> <p>Affidavits of support</p> <p>Employment letters</p> <p>Civil documents (birth, death, etc.)</p> <p>Statements and acknowledgments signed by applicant</p> <p>Immigrant Data Summary (Generated at port of Entry)</p> <p>Entry stamps</p> <p>Non-Immigrant visas</p> <p>Border crossing cards</p> <p>I-94s (filled out at entry and exit)</p> <p>Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status</p> <p>Letters to applicant</p> <p>Transportation letters</p> <p>Voluntary departure bonds</p> <p>Medical reports in A-Files</p> <p>Report 24s (Immigrant visa database searches) in A-Files</p> <p>Third-Party U.S. passports (we assume USCIS will withhold these records)</p> <p>Non-Substantive material (fax cover sheets, blank stationery, receipts, etc.)</p>

Drafted by: L-M: Jeremy Freeman
09/14/2010

Cleared by:

L-CA: Gordon Dickey
CA/VO/L/A- Jeff Gorsky
CA/VO/L/A- Brian Hunt
A/GIS/IPS/PP - Rosemary Reid
A/GIS/IPS/PRV - Charlene Thomas
A/GIS/IPS/RRT - Brandi Garrett
A/GIS/IPS - Alex Galovich
A/GIS - Margaret P. Grafeld
A/FO - Peter Schroeder

A large handwritten bracket groups the list of names. To the right of the bracket is a handwritten signature that appears to be 'AL' and the date '9/14/2010'.

RELEASED IN FULL

Galovich, Alex

From: Gorsky, Jeffrey H
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 2:22 PM
To: Galovich, Alex; Dickey, Gordon J; Hunt, Brian J
Cc: Garrett, Brandi R; Freeman, Jeremy B; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Grafeld, Margaret P
Subject: RE: USCIS Letter....

OK

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

From: Galovich, Alex
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 10:57 AM
To: Dickey, Gordon J; Gorsky, Jeffrey H; Hunt, Brian J
Cc: Garrett, Brandi R; Freeman, Jeremy B; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Grafeld, Margaret P; Galovich, Alex
Subject: USCIS Letter....
Importance: High

<< File: USCIS letter - referrals.docx >>

Gentlemen:

Per Mr. Kennedy's mandate, the letter has to go out today. I want to thank you for your past input and I believe this final draft reflects CA's input and clearance, however, if you have any changes, I need them by 2 PM today.

Thanks,
Al....

*Alex Galovich
Deputy Director
Office of Information Programs & Services
A/GIS/IPS
Department of State
phone: 202.261.8328
fax: 202.663.2764
e-mail: galovicha@state.gov*

White House Call – USCIS Referrals

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

RELEASED IN FULL

Talking Points

1. USCIS recently began to refer records contained in alien files to the Department of State for a decision on their release under the FOIA. It has come to our attention that these records are primarily immigrant visa applications and supporting documents that do not require referral to or review by the Department. In an effort to minimize the number of unnecessary referrals and to conserve scarce FOIA processing resources at both the Department and USCIS we provided a letter to USCIS providing guidance on the scope of documents that require our review. The letter also included a chart providing a full description of the categories of documents that USCIS should not refer to the Department for review. It also lists examples of documents that do require referral to the Department for review under 222(f).

To: Mary Ellen Callahan
 Chief FOIA Officer
 U.S. Department of Homeland Security
 The Privacy Office
 245 Murray Drive SW, Building 410
 STOP-0550
 Washington, DC 20528-0550

Cc: Tracy Bellisime
 Assistant Center Director
 FOIA Program
 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
 150 Space Center Loop, Suite 300
 Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010

Cc: Jill Eggleston
 FOIA Officer
 FOIA/PA Program
 150 Space Center Loop, Suite 300
 Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010
 telephone number: (816) 350-5570
 fax number: (816) 350-5785

2. Although many of the immigrant visa records recently referred to us bear the Department of State name and seal, they are not, in fact, records of the Department of State. As a matter of policy, U.S. embassies and consulates do not retain paper copies of approved immigrant visa applications or supporting documents because the Department of State has no jurisdiction over lawful permanent residents. Instead, those documents are returned to the visa applicant in a sealed envelope, which the applicant presents to a U.S. immigration officer at the port of entry. The approved immigrant visa application and supporting documents become part of the alien file over which USCIS retains disposition authority. In light of these circumstances, we have no need to review approved immigrant visa applications and supporting documents contained in alien files.

3. Similarly, we have no need to review other documents that you recently referred to us, including alien registration forms, petitions, affidavits of support, certificates of birth or death, statements of acknowledgment signed by an applicant, immigrant data summary documents, entry stamps, nonimmigrant visas, border-crossing cards, I-94 arrival and departure forms, certificates of eligibility for exchange visitor status, letters to applicants, transportation letters, voluntary departure bonds, non-substantive materials such as cover sheets and receipts, medical records in A-files, scheduling steps in visa process in A-files, and third-party U.S. passports.
4. We asked that USCIS continue to refer any Department of State documents that may be subject to the confidentiality requirements of section 222(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. § 1202(f)). That statute provides, in pertinent part, that records of the Department of State pertaining to the issuance or refusal of a visa shall be confidential. Records that typically require review under Section 222(f) include Department of State cables, emails, and memoranda pertaining to the issuance or refusal of a visa; non-immigrant visa applications; embassy or consulate visa fraud investigation documents; police reports; visa refusal worksheets; paper copies of documents generated by Department of State electronic databases (e.g., a "report 24," "NIV Applicant Summary," and "NIV Applicant Detail"); asylum-related documents including interagency communications and advisory opinions; and records in interagency databases such as TECS that originated with the Department of State.
5. We look forward to working with USCIS to implement this guidance as they process future FOIA requests. We believe this approach will eliminate the need to refer approximately 85 percent of the material that they recently referred to us. It will also enable USCIS to release many documents in full and to complete the processing of requests with no more effort than it takes to refer cases to us.
6. To deal with the 25,000 cases currently in State's system, we have implemented a streamlined, expedited process:
 - a. We first sorted through all 25,000 Referrals and set aside those cases containing documents that do not require review by State and may be Released in Full. (RIF)
 - i. Approximately 8,000 cases contain all RIF documents. We prepared a form letter and are mailing these documents out to the requesters. We estimate completion of this phase of the project this week.
 - b. We are currently sorting through the remaining 17,000 cases that require review by state and organizing them into three categories:
 - i. Cases in which all docs must be denied in full (DIF) ~40% - 6,800 cases.
 - ii. Cases in which one or more must be DIF, and all others released in full (RIF) ~55% - 9,350 cases.
 - iii. Cases in which at least one document must be excised, released in part (RIP) ~5% - 850 cases.
 - c. The next step is to review and process/close the cases with all DIF documents, approximately 6,800 cases.

Garrett, Brandi R**RELEASED IN FULL**

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Tuesday, October 05, 2010 9:16 AM
To: IPS-RRT
Cc: Galovich, Alex; White, Rosemary C.; AskFreedoms2
Subject: Amended Form Letters - USCIS Referrals

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Importance: High

All,

In an effort to streamline our processing of the USCIS Referrals, we produced two "Form Letters" for the most simple types of cases; RIF – Released in Full and DIF – Denied in Full. We are happy to say that this change in the process drastically increased our production rate!

As you may know, many of these USCIS requests are made by law firms on behalf of their clients. When they receive our reply to their requests, some are having difficulty determining which of their clients these cases pertain to and we are beginning to receive telephone calls for clarity. We will continue to use the Form Letters, but have made a few changes to those letters to include both the Subject Name AND the FOIA hotline number 202-261-8484, for Requester's to call with inquiries about their cases.

The idea behind including the Subject name is to **prevent** future calls for clarity on who the case pertains to. However, just in case there are still questions, including the FOIA hotline number points them in the right direction to receive the assistance and information they are seeking.

New versions of the Form Letters are being distributed this morning. Please destroy all previous versions of the Form Letters and proceed using these new amended versions, which again include a line for the Subject Name AND provides the FOIA hotline number 202-261-8484.

Thanks!

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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Rules and Regulations

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

- (a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.
- (b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, ~~A/GIS/PS/PP/LC~~, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.
- (c) *Time Limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.
- (d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefor. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2010 10:21 AM
To: IPS-RRT
Subject: UPDATED: RRT Procedures for Mailing DIF USCIS Referrals.docx
Attachments: RRT Procedures for Mailing DIF USCIS Referrals.docx

Importance: High

All,

Please see the updated procedures for mailing DIF cases. Please remember not to take a whole box of DIF cases from the Reviewer's area, only one stack at a time.

When you have completed and logged your DIF cases, please store them at your desk. Amy will be delivering empty boxes and signs to attach to those boxes, for storage of the completed/logged DIF cases.

Thanks!

Brandi

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Thursday, September 23, 2010 7:59 AM
To: IPS-RRT
Subject: RRT Procedures for Mailing DIF USCIS Referrals.docx
Importance: High

All,

We will now move forward with mailing the DIF (Denied in Full) cases. This process is even more simple because we are not mailing any documents to the requester, as they are all denied in full, just the form letter and appeal rights. Please see the attached instructions and proceed immediately! We are now down to the wire as one week from now marks the end of FY2010, September 30, 2010. Our goal is to mail/close out as many of these cases as if possible by then.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to this project!

-Brandi

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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Garrett, Brandi R**RELEASED IN FULL**

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2010 3:32 PM
To: IPS-RRT
Cc: AskFreedoms2
Subject: Moving forward with the DHS USCIS Referral Backlog Reduction Project
Importance: High

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

All,

As you may know, we are working on significantly reducing our current backlog of USCIS Referral Cases by the end of FY2010, which is 9/30/2010. That said, below is our course of action for the remainder of the FY10, which leaves us only two more weeks to press through.

1. RRT, CR, PP/IA Staff and a few PRV Students are currently mailing out the 8,000 Released in Full (RIF) cases.
 - a. All RRT Analysts are logging their cases mailed in the excel database.
 - b. RRT Students are updating the External Support Log to track support from other Teams/Analysts
 - c. Freedoms 2 staff is electronically closing out all RIF cases via Freedoms 2
2. RRT (4) and MPD (10) Reviewers are currently sorting through all remaining USCIS Referrals (approx 17,000 cases in 110 boxes) into three categories:
 - a. **Cases in which all docs must be denied in full (DIF) ~40% - 6,800 cases.**
 - b. Cases in which one or more must be DIF, and all others released in full (RIF) ~55% - 9,350 cases.
 - c. Cases in which at least one document must be excised, released in part (RIP) ~5% - 850 cases.
3. RRT (4) and MPD (10) Reviewers are reviewing the DIF cases
4. RRT, CR and PP/IA Analysts will mail out DIF cases using the DIF Form Letter and Appeal Rights – Training forthcoming
 - a. All RRT Analysts are logging their cases mailed in the excel database.
 - b. RRT Students are updating the External Support Log to track support from other Teams/Analysts
 - c. Freedoms 2 staff is electronically closing out all DIF cases via Freedoms 2

Notes:

1. Please make sure all boxes of mailed cases have been logged into the spreadsheet. The date on your letter to the requester, the date in the excel spreadsheet, and the date stamped on your case file should all be the same.

- 2. On your designated day, Students should expect to report to room 7108 to update the external assistance spreadsheet.
- 3. Next phase will be to mail out the DIF's
- 4. FY11 we will get back to business as usual with initiating new cases and processing cases, and we will begin our case file retirement project (we will ensure all case files are in chronological order within the boxes at that time).

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, September 15, 2010 11:37 AM
To: IPS-RRT
Subject: ALL RIF Boxes Distributed: USCIS Referrals
Importance: High

All,

Please note that all boxes of the nearly 8,000 USCIS Referral cases containing docs Released in Full (RIF) have now been distributed. There are no remaining boxes.

I will be distributing guidance on moving forward.

Please do not slow down your pace in the hopes of reserving cases for overtime hours. There is plenty more work where this came from ☺ We have nearly 7,000 Denied in Full (DIF) cases to be mailed and closed out. More information on that next phase of this project forthcoming.

Thank you all again for your support of and assistance with this project....together we are making great strides!

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Friday, September 10, 2010 1:10 PM
To: IPS-RRT; Eley, Darlyce M; Helseth, William A; Stein, Harry L; Brittingham, Marilyn E; Briscoe, Shirley A; Zeru, Yelena K; Pace, Vincenzo A; Peppe, Thomas A; Matsui, Cory K; Averette, Angela M; Hage, Richard S
Cc: Galovich, Alex; Reid, Rosemary D; Thomas, Charlene W; Kiser, Daniel L
Subject: THANK YOU!!!!!! USCIS Referral RIF Doc Sorting Project COMPLETE!
Importance: High

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

All,

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for your contributions to our efforts to sort through well over 23,000 cases of documents to distinguish those which contain fully releasable documents. The sorting project is now COMPLETE! There is no way we would have been able to accomplish this large feat without the collaboration of all teams and staff involved! A special thank you to Darlyce Eley for allowing us to use not only the expertise of her full staff, but also her large conference room (Snake Room) as a staging ground for this project and for allowing us unlimited access to her suite to continue working on the project after regular office hours.

-Brandi

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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Our mission is to meet the needs of our customers and the United States Government

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, September 08, 2010 4:45 PM
To: IPS-RRT
Subject: STOP!

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen,
Senior Reviewer

Importance: High

All

I am in the process of flushing out the guidance on the USCIS Referral Project based on a meeting I just came from with Senior Management. I will send out updated guidance in the morning, so please stop the following for the day until you receive updated guidance tomorrow.

Items to be changed:

Form Letter for docs released in full

Mailing requirements/procedures

Storage of completed cases

Group Leaders:

Please let me know which new students on your staff still need training.

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

UNCLASSIFIED in accordance with E.O. 12958

Our mission is to meet the needs of our customers and the United States Government

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, September 01, 2010 3:08 PM
To: IPS-RRT
Cc: AskFreedoms2; Galovich, Alex
Subject: Moving Forward with RRT Initiatives and Priorities

Importance: High

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

All,

Please see below for guidance on RRT Initiatives and Priorities:

1. **Our number one priority is to sort through the current USCIS Referral Documents. During your regularly scheduled hours, you should be in the Snake Room sorting through the case files.** If you have cases in your "In Box" that can be closed out, you may spend a little time each day doing so.
2. Those documents that do not need to be reviewed by State will be released to the Requester's with a Form Letter. Cristina Logg will be spearheading the organization of these boxes (Column 2 documents). After we have sorted through all of the cases, our number two priority will be to quickly close out all of these cases, using the Grant Code Cancelled and placing a comment in Freedoms "No Review Required by State, All Documents Released to Requester". Joyce Gregory will inform RRT when to start closing/cancelling these cases. The AC Freedoms2 team will assist with closing out these cases in the system in large masses as opposed to one at a time.
3. Those documents that are State's responsibility to review (Column 1 Documents) will be placed back into the general queue for assignment, review and outprocessing. Chris Biggs will be spearheading the organization of these case files. After we have done items 1 and 2 listed above, our third priority will be to assign and complete these cases from the general queue. **DO NOT ASSIGN THESE NEW CASES TO YOURSELVES UNTIL CASES IN ITEM #2 ARE COMPLETED AND CLOSED OUT.**
4. In the meantime, all Students will be trained on Retirement Procedures by their Group Leads. Amy DiGiovine will prepare/distribute guidance and Joyce Gregory will inform RRT when to start retiring closed/cancelled cases.

Thanks!

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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Our mission is to meet the needs of our customers and the United States Government.

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, September 01, 2010 1:21 PM
To: IPS-RRT; Galovich, Alex; Grafeld, Margaret P
Cc: AskFreedoms2; Houser-Jackson, Celeste A
Subject: RRT Backlog Reduction Goal for Case Closures Met and Passed!

Importance: High

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

All,

Cases Closed: As of NOW, we have closed 2,122 cases, surpassing our end of FY10 goal of 2,100 by 22 cases! Considering our current project of sorting out USCIS Referral documents, we are sure to surpass this even more so by leaps and bounds in the coming weeks.

Cases Initiated: As of NOW we have initiated 24,820 cases since we were advised to stop initiating new cases and focus on sorting the USCIS Referral documents. Our goal is to initiate 25,000 cases. After the sorting project is complete and we commence with initiation, we will only have 180 cases left to initiate to meet that goal.

A **HUGE THANK YOU** to everyone for all of your hard work and support of our efforts!

-Brandi

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

Subject: MAKE UP SESSION #2: USCIS/DHS Referral Document Identification Training
Location: 5th FI Conference Room

Start: Wed 9/1/2010 1:00 PM
End: Wed 9/1/2010 2:30 PM
Show Time As: Tentative

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Garrett, Brandi R
Required Attendees: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2; Reid, Rosemary D; Eley, Darlyce M; Chang, Christopher M

MAKE UP SESSION: If you were planning to attend the Monday 8/30/2010 Training, which was cancelled, please plan to attend a make-up session on 8/31 or 9/1.

RRT has over 24,000 USCIS/DHS Referrals, and counting. After much review and discussion of this new surge of work, we have discovered that a large bulk of the documents referred to STATE do not belong to us. Thus, we plan to send those documents that should have never come to STATE, back to DHS.

As is mandated by the White House, we need to move fast to weed out those documents that we plan to send back to DHS and we need **ALL HANDS ON DECK** to do so.

This training session will provide guidance on how to determine which documents should remain with STATE and those that need to be returned to DHS.

Thanks ALL!

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

Subject: MAKE UP SESSION #1: USCIS/DHS Referral Document Identification Training
Location: 1st FI Conference Room

Start: Tue 8/31/2010 12:30 PM
End: Tue 8/31/2010 2:00 PM
Show Time As: Tentative

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Garrett, Brandi R
Required Attendees: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2; Chang, Christopher M; Eley, Darlyce M; Reid, Rosemary D

MAKE UP SESSION: If you were planning to attend the Monday 8/30/2010 Training, which was cancelled, please plan to attend a make up session on Tuesday 8/31/2010.

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Thanks ALL!

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

Subject: MAKE UP SESSION: USCIS/DHS Referral Document Identification Training
Location: 1st FI Conference Room

Start: Mon 8/30/2010 11:00 AM
End: Mon 8/30/2010 12:30 PM
Show Time As: Tentative

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Garrett, Brandi R
Required Attendees: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2; Eley, Darlyce M; Chang, Christopher M; Manheim, Marianne J
Optional Attendees: Biggs, Christopher A; Casto, Mary T; Milojkovic, Bojana; DiGiovine, Amy L; Blodgett, John S; Holliday, Pam C

Importance: High

MAKE UP SESSION. Please note change in time!

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This training session will provide guidance on how to determine which documents should remain with STATE and those that need to be returned to DHS.

Thanks ALL!

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

Subject: MAKE UP SESSION: USCIS/DHS Referral Document Identification Training
Location: 1st FI Conference Room
Start: Mon 8/30/2010 10:00 AM
End: Mon 8/30/2010 12:00 PM **REVIEW AUTHORITY:** Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer
Show Time As: Tentative
Recurrence: (none)
Meeting Status: Not yet responded
Organizer: Garrett, Brandi R
Required Attendees: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2; Eley, Darlyce M; Chang, Christopher M; Manheim, Marianne J
Importance: High

MAKE UP SESSION

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This training session will provide guidance on how to determine which documents should remain with STATE and those that need to be returned to DHS.

Thanks ALL!

RELEASED IN FULL

Garrett, Brandi R

Subject: USCIS/DHS Referral Document Identification Training
Location: 1st Flo Conference Room

Start: Fri 8/27/2010 10:00 AM
End: Fri 8/27/2010 12:00 PM
Show Time As: Tentative

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
Reviewer

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Garrett, Brandi R

Required Attendees: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2; Chang, Christopher M; Eley, Darlyce M; Manheim, Marianne J

Importance: High

RRT has over 24,000 USCIS/DHS Referrals, and counting. After much review and discussion of this new surge of work, we have discovered that a large bulk of the documents referred to STATE do not belong to us. Thus, we plan to send those documents that should have never come to STATE, back to DHS.

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This training session will provide guidance on how to determine which documents should remain with STATE and those that need to be returned to DHS.

Thanks ALL!

Garrett, Brandi R**RELEASED IN FULL**

From: Garrett, Brandi R
Sent: Wednesday, August 25, 2010 4:50 PM
To: IPS-RRT; AskFreedoms2
Cc: Galovich, Alex; Reid, Rosemary D; Eley, Darlyce M; Manheim, Marianne J
Subject: USCIS Referrals

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior
 Reviewer

Importance: High

All,

As you know we have over 24,000 USCIS/DHS Referrals, and counting. After much review and discussion of this new surge of work, we have discovered that a large bulk of the documents referred to STATE do not belong to us. Thus, we plan to send those documents that should have never come to STATE, back to DHS.

As is mandated by the White House, we need to move fast to weed out those documents that we plan to send back to DHS and we need **ALL HANDS ON DECK** to do so. The White House is expecting a status update as early as Monday, August 30, 2010.

I know that we are all up for this new challenge and I look forward to forthcoming success. We are living up to our name, as you all have proven beyond expectations that we can work cohesively to achieve and surpass the goals of this organization....with SPEED and EFFICIENCY!

We will be collaborating with the AC AskFreedoms2 Team (as usual) and the PP/IA (Special Projects) Team, as well as a few other IPS staff to get this done.

A training schedule and additional guidance on moving forward will be distributed tomorrow.

Until further notice, STOP:

- 1. Initiating new case**
- 2. Sending cases to AC for Batch Scanning**
- 3. Sending cases to Review**

Thanks in advance!
 Brandi

Brandi R Garrett, MSA • Chief • Rapid Response Team • Office of Information Programs and Services • US Department of State

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Galovich, Alex**RELEASED IN PART B5****REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer**

From: Freeman, Jeremy B
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 10:18 AM
To: Garrett, Brandi R
Cc: Galovich, Alex; Reid, Rosemary D; Thomas, Charlene W
Subject: FW: Future USCIS Referrals - What We Need to Review

Brandi,

This is the response I got from Gordon last week. He asked a question but did not make any changes. I think you should go ahead and circulate the current version again to him (and CA/VO) for final clearance. Advertise it as the draft that will go out today unless they make changes. If they have questions or edits, they need to be made in redline changes.

I am not an expert by any stretch of the imagination on visa documents, so I have to rely on L/CA for this. Let me know if you need anything further.

From: Dickey, Gordon J
Sent: Friday, September 10, 2010 7:54 AM
To: Freeman, Jeremy B
Subject: RE: Future USCIS Referrals - What We Need to Review

B5

From: Freeman, Jeremy B
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2010 5:52 PM
To: Dickey, Gordon J
Cc: Blodgett, John S; Garrett, Brandi R; Gregory, Joyce D; Murphy, Nicholas M
Subject: FW: Future USCIS Referrals - What We Need to Review

Gordon,

Would you mind taking a quick look at this (slightly revised) version of the chart that the FOIA team intends to send to USCIS? Just want to make sure that the revisions don't pose any problems.

Thanks,
 Jeremy

Jeremy B. Freeman
 L/M
 (202) 647-2227

From: Blodgett, John S
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2010 11:05 AM
To: Freeman, Jeremy B
Cc: Garrett, Brandi R; Gregory, Joyce D; Murphy, Nicholas M
Subject: FW: Future USCIS Referrals - What We Need to Review

Hi Jeremy,

Brandi asked me to forward to you ASAP this latest list of items we need to review. It changed slightly from what L/CA originally approved, and I'm not sure if they received this latest version. Thanks.

Steve Blodgett

From: Blodgett, John S
Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2010 10:58 AM
To: Garrett, Brandi R
Subject: Future USCIS Referrals - What We Need to Review

Hi Brandi,

I don't know whether the letter to USCIS has already gone out. If not, it might be a good idea to make sure Jeremy has our latest proposed list, which I sent to you on September 1. It is different from the list we used to sort the cases already received, since we took it upon ourselves to review and deny Medical Reports, Report 24s, and 3rd Party U.S. Passports already received.

I hope the letter goes out soon. The quicker we can turn down the faucet, the better. If USCIS implements the attached list, the flow of new referrals could be reduced by as much as 70 pct.

<< File: Future Referrals.docx >>

RELEASED IN PART B5

John MANAHA

Galovich, Alex

From: Dickey, Gordon J
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 11:57 AM
To: Galovich, Alex
Cc: Freeman, Jeremy B
Subject: RE: USCIS Letter....

MANIHA

33514

I have my doubts as to whether it should be included. Nevertheless, the write up is fine.

B5

From: Galovich, Alex
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 10:57 AM
To: Dickey, Gordon J; Gorsky, Jeffrey H; Hunt, Brian J
Cc: Garrett, Brandi R; Freeman, Jeremy B; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Grafeld, Margaret P; Galovich, Alex
Subject: USCIS Letter....
Importance: High

<< File: USCIS letter - referrals.docx >>

Gentlemen:

Per Mr. Kennedy's mandate, the letter has to go out today. I want to thank you for your past input and I believe this final draft reflects CA's input and clearance, however, if you have any changes, I need them by 2 PM today.

Thanks,
 Al....

Alex Galovich
 Deputy Director
 Office of Information Programs & Services
 A/GIS/IPS
 Department of State
 phone: 202.261.8328
 fax: 202.663.2764
 e-mail: galovicha@state.gov

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

B5

Galovich, Alex**RELEASED IN PART B5****REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer**

From: Freeman, Jeremy B
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 10:07 AM
To: Galovich, Alex; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Garrett, Brandi R
Cc: Thomas, Charlene W
Subject: RE: FOIA discussion SECOND

I am tied up most of this morning with litigation deadlines and this afternoon I will be out of the office. I believe that Brandy has the current version of the letter. As for the proper addressee, someone from IPS can call DHS's FOIA office to find out the name and email address of their chief FOIA officer. (I found their number just using Google.) You can address the letter directly to the chief FOIA officer. I would suggest adding Tracy Bellisime at USCIS as a cc (she is the current addressee). You may also want to call Tracy (816-350-5524) to find out the name and email address for the USCIS FOIA director (I believe it is Jill Eggleston), and you could add her as cc, as well.

As for the clearance process, I'd send the final draft of the letter to Gordon Dickey in L/CA and to Jeff Gorsky and Brian Hunt in CA/VO for a final look. Tell them that the letter has to go out today per M. I would thank them for their past input and tell them that you believe this draft reflects their input, but if they have any changes, you need them by 2:00pm. And then I would give Steve R.'s assistants a heads up that this is coming for his signature later today. After he signs, you can send the letter by email as a PDF to the DHS Chief FOIA officer, with Tracy and Jill on the cc line.

Sound okay?

From: Galovich, Alex
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 9:58 AM
To: Freeman, Jeremy B; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Garrett, Brandi R
Cc: Thomas, Charlene W
Subject: RE: FOIA discussion SECOND
Importance: High

Jeremy, Rosemary, Brandi –

I'm not sure of the format or the clearance process to get this out today. Can you check and have the letter prepared and obtain all the required clearances ASAP. I can have it hand carried over to Steve early afternoon.

Thanks.

*Alex Galovich
 Deputy Director
 Office of Information Programs & Services
 A/GIS/IPS
 Department of State
 phone: 202.261.8328
 fax: 202.663.2764
 e-mail: galovitch@state.gov*

From: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 9:49 AM
To: Galovich, Alex; Freeman, Jeremy B; Thomas, Charlene W; Reid, Rosemary D; Garrett, Brandi R
Subject: Fw: FOIA discussion SECOND
Importance: High

Pls see message below.

I must rely on you all to pull this together per M's mandate.

I believe that we agreed Steve R should sign, so I will tee it up with him unless I hear from you immediately to the contrary.

Your call regarding addressees and conveying copies electronically today.

From: Kennedy, Patrick F
To: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Tue Sep 14 09:45:01 2010
Subject: RE: FOIA discussion SECOND

Peggy

Have letter sent today

Regards

pat

From: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Tuesday, September 14, 2010 9:40 AM
To: Kennedy, Patrick F
Subject: Re: FOIA discussion SECOND

Sorry, Pat, long day.

The letter is ready to send, but has not yet been sent.



Hope this clarifies.

Peggy

From: Kennedy, Patrick F
To: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Tue Sep 14 09:31:11 2010
Subject: RE: FOIA discussion SECOND

Peggy

Still confused

Was the letter sent to DHS as the first sentence suggests or are we proposed to send it as the second sentence appears to read

Regards

pat

From: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Monday, September 13, 2010 9:51 PM
To: Kennedy, Patrick F
Subject: Re: FOIA discussion SECOND

Pat,

Reading from my berry, so nothing is highlighted.

B5

Best, Peggy

From: Kennedy, Patrick F
To: Grafeld, Margaret P
Sent: Mon Sep 13 19:25:30 2010
Subject: RE: FOIA discussion SECOND

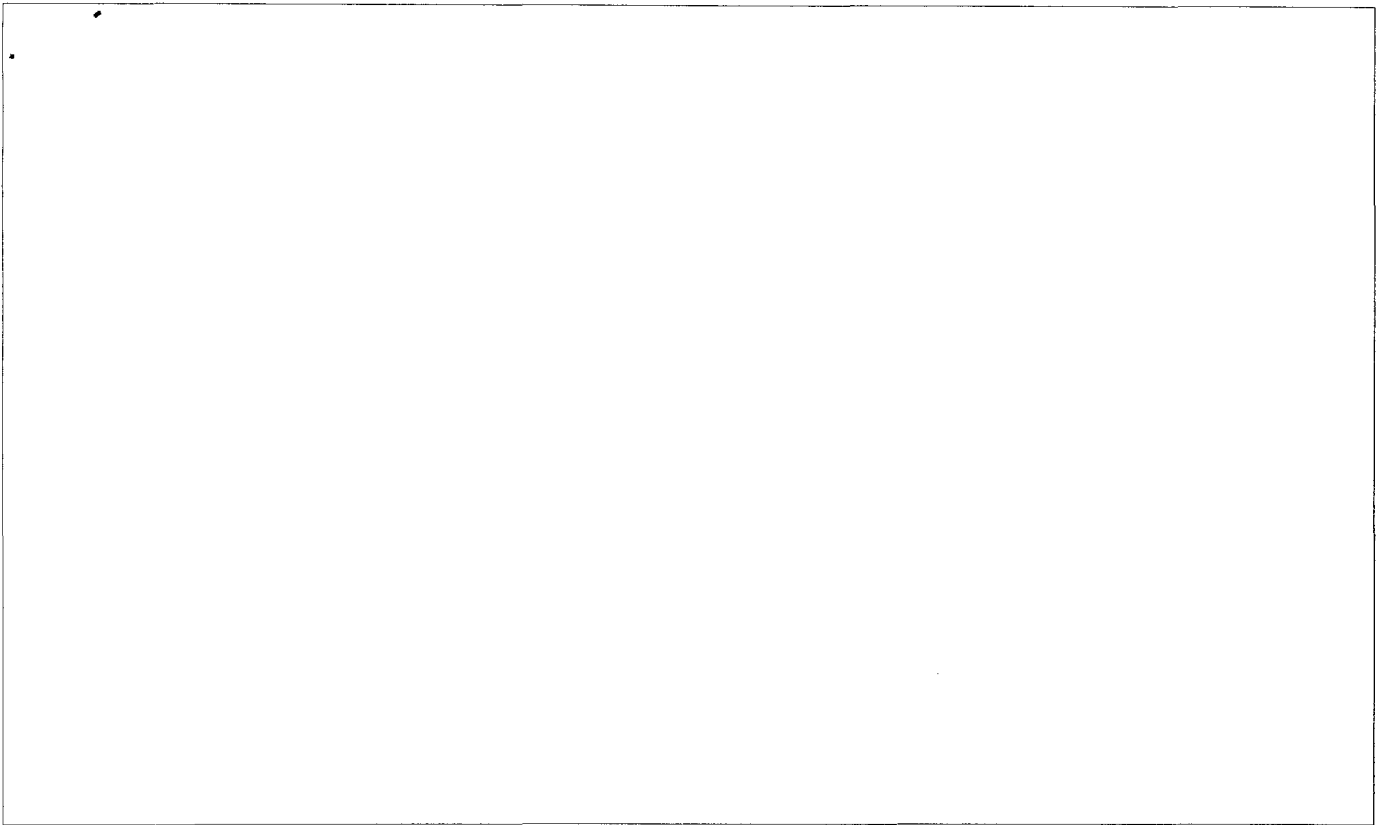
B5

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RELEASED IN PART B5

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

Galovich, Alex

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Galovich, Alex

RELEASED IN PART B5

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

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