

CHANGE IS IN NAME ONLY FOR CENTURY-OLD INS

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Body

The Immigration and Naturalization Service, the more than **century-old** federal agency, ceased to exist officially last weekend, when it became part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The old INS is now the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). Enforcement and border patrol are now under different divisions: the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection.

But the **change** with immigration services, at least for now, is **only** in **name**, said Sharon Rummery, spokeswoman for the BCIS district office in San Francisco, the former INS office.

We asked Rummery to answer questions about the transition.

Q

What happens to pending applications for citizenship, green cards and other requests?

A

The same thing happens to it this week as if you'd filed it last week. Same people, same location, same fingerprinting sites, using the same forms. The whole **change** is going to be transparent to people we serve.

Q

Are there going to be new offices for the BCIS?

A

We're not moving. We're going to put up the banners with the new **name**, BCIS, soon, at the same locations in San Francisco and San Jose.

Q

Will there be delays in processing applications as a result of the transition?

A

This is a **change** that isn't **change**.

Despite the transition, the national customer service number for those with pending applications is the same: (800) 375-5283, or for the hearing impaired, (800) 767-1833. The new BCIS web site is www.immigration.gov.

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Management of asylum cases will remain under the jurisdiction of headquarters in Washington, D.C., Rummery said.

Dual passports

Q

I was born in Vietnam, the son of a U.S. military serviceman. I came to the United States in 1984 and want to know if I'm allowed to have a passport from both countries.

Charlie

A

If you qualify for citizenship in two different countries, then you are entitled to have two passports. But while here you will be recognized **only** as a citizen of the United States, said Stuart Patt, a spokesman with the State Department.

If you travel outside the United States, you can use either passport, but you must use the American passport when you return, Patt said.

Q

I came to the U.S. in November 2000 to join my husband. He is now a citizen, and I'm a permanent resident. How long must I wait to apply for citizenship, and at what point in the immigration process can I petition for my mother to come, too?

Rosalyn

A

Legal permanent residents, such as yourself, cannot petition for their parents. You must first become a citizen, said Katharine "Katy" Henrikson, an attorney with Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, a non-profit organization.

You are eligible to apply for citizenship at the earliest of two dates, Henrikson said. You could do so on your third anniversary as a legal resident, as long as you were married to and living with your husband during that time, and provided he was a citizen those three years. You could also apply for citizenship after five years of legal residency, regardless of being married.

Notes

Immigrant experience

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