

Joseph Law Firm^{PC}

Immigration Law Specialists

Newsletter

August/September 2016

Immigration News

Naturalization Ceremonies to be Held in National Parks to Celebrate 100th

Contributed by Courtney Butler, Associate Attorney

On August 25, 2016, the National Park Service (“NPS”) celebrated its 100th anniversary. As a birthday present representing its partnership with NPS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) conducted 16 naturalization ceremonies at national parks across the United States, welcoming 450 new United States citizens. USCIS plans to hold at least 100 naturalization ceremonies in national parks throughout the year.

According to NPS Director Jonathan B. Jarvis, “National parks tell the stories of notable people, great achievements, and monumental events that shaped our nation, our government, and our society. These magnificent places belong to all Americans and we invite everyone, especially our newest citizens, to Find Your Park.”

Since 2006, when USCIS and NPS first partnered to promote awareness and understanding of citizenship, NPS has hosted naturalization ceremonies in such locations as the rim of the Grand Canyon, the base of Mount Rushmore, Ellis Island, and the Lincoln Memorial. The naturalization ceremonies on August 25 were held at locations such as Grand Canyon National Park, the World War II Memorial, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Biscayne National Park, Fort Smith National Historic Site, Big Thicket National Preserve, and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.



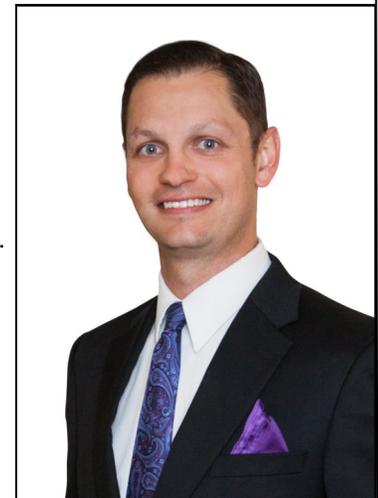
Immigration Court Backlog Tops 500,000 Pending Cases

Contributed by Alex McShiras, Associate Attorney

As of July 21, 2016, there are 500,051 cases pending in Immigration Courts across the United States. Since 2011, more than 200,000 cases have been added to the docket and the number will continue to rise until the Court hires more Judges to meet the need.

Congress has not allocated sufficient funding to Immigration Courts and as a result, many Immigration Courts, including the Denver Immigration Court, have cases pending five or more years. In Denver, the average number of days a case is on the docket is 933, the highest in the country. As of July, there are approximately 9,420 cases pending in Denver. That is up from about 7,400 cases in 2013.

According to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), 34 new judges have been hired since the beginning of 2016. There is a pending budget proposal that would allow more judges to be hired. Currently, there are 277 Immigration Judges hearing cases. An EOIR spokeswoman stated that if the budget proposal is passed, the agency would add as many as 122 more judges.



Give Us Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses, and Your Snapchat Username

Contributed by Aaron Hall, Partner

Visitors to the United States, including those using the Visa Waiver Program and those using Visitors Visas, have long been required to fill out forms to submit to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) prior to admission to the United States. On June 23, 2016, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) submitted a proposal which would expand the information requested of visitors at the time of entry.

Specifically, the visitor would be requested to “enter information associated with your online presence—provider/platform—social identity identifier.” The proposal states that “collecting social media data will enhance the existing investigative process and provide DHS greater clarity and visibility to possible nefarious activity and connections by providing an additional tool set which analysts and investigators may use to better analyze and investigate the case.”

So DHS now wants to ask people to turn over their “social media identifiers” upon entry to the country. Presumably, visitors wanting to properly complete the form would thus be handing over their account names for Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and other platforms. Visitors would be left to hope that government officials choose not to review any personal or embarrassing content. Or worse, content critical of U.S. government policy or complaining of treatment by DHS officials which could lead to retaliation.

Citing the highly invasive nature of this proposal, the American Immigrations Lawyers Association (AILA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and other organizations submitted a letter to CBP requesting that it abandon the idea, stating, “it is clear that an open-ended inquiry into ‘online presence’ would give DHS a window into applicants’ private lives. Individuals’ ‘online presence’ could include their reading lists, political affinities, professional activities, and private diversions.”

This letter and other comments from the public are currently being considered. A final decision on whether the CBP proposal will become a reality will likely come in late 2016 or early 2017.



Firm News

Hangin' Your Shingle

Kirby Joseph, Managing Partner of JLF and Founder of Strategy4Success, was a faculty member at a recent seminar on building a successful legal career and spoke on the topic of Key Aspects of Law Practice Management. The seminar was sponsored by the Professional Liability Committee and the Solo/Small Firm Section of the Colorado Bar Association.

Notice to Client Regarding Payment Plans

Joseph Law Firm, P.C. offers payment plans as a courtesy to our clients so that some clients may be able to afford the legal services that they might not be able to afford in the absence of a payment plan. Because of the growing number of client's on payment plans and our desire to continue offering payment plans, we would like to notify all of our clients regarding some changes that will be taking place. Effective immediately, clients will no longer be allowed to modify their monthly payments. If a client requests a modification this will only be considered on a case by case basis and will only be considered once per year. Thank you for your understanding.



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