



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

January 26, 2009

Editor
Canada Free Press
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Editor:

U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) employees are some of the most experienced and highly skilled members of America's federal workforce. As the gatekeepers of the United States' immigration system, we all serve on the front lines of our homeland defense. And we, as any other organization with thousands of employees, are a reflection of our society and are not immune from instances when a few choose to abuse the authority entrusted in them. Your readers have a right to know – and you have a responsibility to report – how our agency deals with those few.

Unfortunately, your online paper chose to run an article on January 21 filled with errors and unsubstantiated information. Worse, it basically labeled this superb organization as one inhabited by 'crooks and thugs.' As an Immigration Officer with more than 30 years experience at both the former Immigration and Naturalization Service and USCIS, I simply cannot allow this story to stand.

Ensuring the integrity of the U.S. immigration system is our highest priority. When an individual fails to meet our high standards we work hard to ensure that justice is done, with appropriate and full punishment.

That's the record. To further this important mission, USCIS established the Office of Security and Integrity (OSI) in 2007. In doing so, we tripled the resources dedicated to this critical mission and placed it under our executive leadership.

Through OSI's efforts, USCIS is well positioned to evaluate vulnerabilities, expose instances of corruption and create agency controls that minimize the effect a corrupt individual can have on our agency. OSI has also expanded its Investigations Division to receive complaints of alleged employee misconduct, corruption and fraud. We have in place an aggressive program that ensures employees know they are responsible for ensuring our agency's integrity.

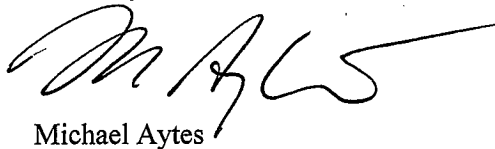
Further, the article's accusation that "USCIS is overwhelmed by backlogs from immigrants following America's laws stuck in the nonsensical and degrading bureaucracy," ignores the fact that USCIS received nearly five million applications and petitions for immigrant benefits last year, yet we completed more than six and a half million cases. This substantially reduced processing times – especially for naturalization.

I don't expect someone with very limited knowledge of the U.S. immigration system to be able to offer substantive or constructive criticism of agency policy and procedure. However, I do expect a reporter to stick

to the facts and refrain from offering editorial opinion in their work. This article served no other functional purpose other than to tarnish the honorable reputation of our employees and associate the entire USCIS workforce with criminals. It was shameful reporting and a deliberate smear that should not be counted as news.

At USCIS, we can't afford to make mistakes in our work. I challenge your paper to live up to these same high standards and seek to correct the inaccuracies of your story.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Aytes', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Aytes
Acting Deputy Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services