

Global Immigration alert

April 2026

United States

Certain applications pending with USCIS impacted by new vetting process

Executive summary

On 27 April 2026, the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) began receiving reports that US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has placed a new processing hold on certain applications, including green card and asylum applications. Several news outlets have since confirmed that USCIS has circulated internal guidance directing officers not to adjudicate certain pending applications until newly-mandated enhanced security checks are completed.

Background and analysis

Applicants for a green card and certain other immigration benefits in the United States are required to provide biometrics with some age-related exceptions. USCIS is not authorized to approve these applications until background and security checks have been completed.

On 6 February 2026, President Donald Trump issued an executive order directing the Attorney General to provide the Department of Homeland Security and its agencies, including USCIS, with access to criminal history record information (CHRI) available to or maintained by the Department of Justice. The enhanced security checks mandated by the new USCIS guidance will require resubmission of applicants' fingerprints for pending cases in which the CHRI was received by USCIS prior to 27 April 2026, with the possible exception of Naturalization cases where the applicant has already been scheduled for their oath ceremony.

What this means

The internal guidance has yet to be made public by USCIS, so further clarifying details may become available, but at this time, applicants who have already completed the biometrics process may need to provide them again. If required to do so, USCIS will send an appointment notice directing the applicant to appear at a local Application Support Center.

Applicants are reminded to confirm that USCIS has their current residential and mailing address(es) on file and to file Form AR-11 to notify USCIS of any address changes. If applicants plan to travel during the pendency of their applications, it is important to monitor mail received from USCIS as benefit requests may be deemed abandoned and denied if the applicant fails to appear for a biometrics services appointment.

It is unclear at this time how many applications pending with USCIS will be impacted and what the consequent processing delays are likely to be. We will continue to monitor and share future developments. For additional information, or if you wish to discuss this further, please contact your EY Law LLP professional or Mehlman Jacobs LLP professional.

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