



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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USCIS to Implement Online Processing of FOIA Requests

New System Allows Users to Submit and Receive FOIA Requests Digitally

WASHINGTON—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced the launch of our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Immigration Records SysTem (FIRST), which will eventually allow users to submit, manage, and receive FOIA requests entirely online. Before this change, USCIS only accepted FOIA requests by mail, fax, and email, and requestors typically received their documents on a compact disc by mail.

USCIS is commencing FIRST’s digital delivery of services in phases. Initially, requestors who have an immigration court date pending and file a request for documents can create an account within myUSCIS to receive documents digitally, eliminating the time and expense associated with receiving requests by mail.

Through their account, requestors can track the status of their FOIA cases and will receive email notification when USCIS has uploaded their records. In the coming months, this digital delivery option will be expanded to all FOIA and Privacy Act (PA) requestors. When FIRST is fully operational, requestors will be able to use a completely digital FOIA/PA system, from online submission to retrieving and downloading responsive documents. USCIS will notify the public as additional services become available.

“Today marks an important step in our effort to transform outdated USCIS systems,” said USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna. “Modernizing the way we accept and respond to FOIA and Privacy Act requests is a priority. FIRST’s efficient process will reduce our FOIA backlog, eliminate errors, and speed up the delivery of documents to requestors.”

FIRST is part of the agency’s ongoing effort to move the nation’s legal immigration system away from paper-based services to digital transactions.

In December, USCIS expanded the variety of documents available in the [Electronic Reading Room](#), disclosing cleared policy documents and external correspondence addressed to our leadership, along with their responses. This is in addition to providing access to information that had been requested at least three times and had been provided under FOIA.

FOIA provides the general public an avenue to request access to a variety of public information from federal agencies. Like all federal agencies, USCIS is required to disclose such records and information upon receiving a request.

For more information on USCIS and our programs, please visit uscis.gov or follow us on Twitter ([@uscis](#)), YouTube ([/uscis](#)), and Facebook.

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