

Tips for Requesting Casework Assistance

I understand that by the time you contact my office for assistance on your issue, you have already tried to resolve the problem directly with the agency involved with little to no success. While we cannot guarantee you a favorable outcome, we will do our best to help you receive a fair and timely response to your problem. I encourage you to complete a [General Privacy Release Form](#) for non-immigration related matters and return it to the district office nearest you. If your issue involves the immigration process (i.e. issues involving the USCIS, National Visa Center or U.S. embassies and consulates, etc.), please use the [Immigration Privacy Release Form](#).

Below you will find a few agency specific tips to keep in mind when requesting casework assistance. Feel free to contact any of my district offices if you have any additional questions.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

- In order to contact a VA Regional Office (VARO) regarding benefits, the veteran/veteran's spouse must already have an active claim at the VARO. If you have not yet filed a claim, you can contact the VA directly for information on how to do so.
- The VA requires a signed Privacy Release Form from the veteran involved from my office to obtain information on a case. The VA **does not** recognize Power of Attorney (POA).
- Expediting claims for benefits will be considered if the veterans is going to be homeless and has a letter from his/her landlord with an intent to evict, or if there is an imminent medical emergency.

Department of Defense (DOD)

- My staff does not review requests for recommendations for military service.
- The DOD and all branches of the military require signed authorization from the service member in order to release information regarding his/her case. DOD officials **do not** accept Privacy Release forms from the family of service members.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

- My staff and I work along with officials at the Alabama Taxpayer Advocate Service to correct issues involving the IRS.
- In order for my office to open an inquiry with the IRS, you must complete a Privacy Release form. You must also include your social security number and list the relevant tax years involved.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

- As of February 15, 2018, USCIS officials changed the requirements pertaining to Privacy Release forms. USCIS officials will release case-specific information in response to a congressional casework inquiry only when a privacy release:
 - Contains a handwritten and notarized signature or signature made under penalty of perjury by the subject of the records, even if outside the United States. (Digital signatures are not acceptable.)
 - Names only the congressional office as the authorized recipient.

- Includes a full translation of any non-English text, as well as the translator's certification of competence to translate from the foreign language into English.
- Is newly signed and dated for a follow-up question or status update request after the initial/previous inquiry received a meaningful and accurate response and has been closed for 30 days.
- If your issue involves the immigration process (i.e. issues involving the USCIS, National Visa Center or U.S. embassies and consulates, etc.), please use the [Immigration Privacy Release Form](#).
- All expedite requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and are granted at the discretion of the agency Director. The criteria are:
 - Severe financial loss to company or individual
 - Extreme emergent situation
 - Humanitarian situation
 - Nonprofit status of requesting organization in furtherance of the cultural and social interest of the United States
 - Department of Defense national interest situation
 - USCIS error
- Cases pending a "FBI Name Check": The expedite criteria listed above does not apply. My staff will be happy to assist you in following up on the status of your pending name check if your case has been pending with the FBI for at least one year. We are very much aware of the delays and inconveniences that result from the FBI name check process, however, please keep in mind that the FBI cannot determine when your name check will be completed. The USCIS issued a [press release](#) regarding this process.
- Employment-Based I-485 Application: If you are requesting assistance with an employment based I-485 petition, please include the priority date and receipt number of the I-140 (Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker) petition attached to your case. If you have more than one valid I-140 petition and you would like them to be cross charged or interfiled, please make sure to include the priority date, receipt number, and country charge of each I-140 petition.

[U.S. Department of State \(STATE\)](#)

- Visa cases pending a "security clearance": This is not the same as a FBI name check. My staff can check on the status of your case, but are not able to request an expedite or waiver of mandatory clearance procedures.
- If you are writing about a denied non-immigrant (visitor's) visa case, please keep in mind that there is no appeal option for such cases. If the applicant is still interested in visiting the U.S. he/she should be prepared to reapply directly with the U.S. Consulate/Embassy.
- **U.S. Citizens Traveling Abroad:** It is always recommended that you register your trip abroad with the Department of State through the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). If you are contacting me about your concerns with a U.S. citizen who is currently abroad, please include that person's full name, passport number and date of birth. For emergency assistance to Americans abroad, please call (888) 407-4747. This line is operated 24 hours a day.

[Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#)

If you believe your name appears in error on a TSA or other government watch list, my office can assist you in making a claim with TSA through the Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP). However, please note that TSA does not guarantee that making a TRIP claim will eliminate all future travel difficulties. You may access the TSA TRIP form through the following link: <https://goo.gl/4eNxQe>.

[Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#)

- Please be as clear as possible when outlining your concerns with SSA. The agency will only be able to address your concerns as they are outlined in your letter/[Privacy Release Form](#) to me.
- All requests for assistance with SSA must include the person's name, contact information, Social Security number, and a signed [General Privacy Release Form](#). This must form must be signed by the person involved, or proof of Power of Attorney must be provided. It is helpful if you include copies of recent correspondence with the agency.
- **Expedite Requests:** Please refer to the SSA's Hearings, Appeals and Litigation Law Manual (HALLEX) for more explicit qualifications: <https://goo.gl/1wfR3R>. If you would like to apply for expedited processing, please provide my office with evidence and documentation, as outlined by HALLEX, demonstrating why you need your case expedited.

[Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services \(CMS\)](#)

- Please be as clear as possible when outlining your concerns with CMS. The agency will only be able to address your concerns as they are outlined in your letter/Privacy Release Form to me.
- All requests for assistance from Medicare beneficiaries (those receiving benefits through Medicare) must include the participant's name, contact information, Social Security number and a signed Privacy Release Form. This must form must be signed by the person involved, or proof of Power of Attorney must be provided. It is helpful if you include copies of recent correspondence with the agency.
- Medicare service providers: Please include the provider's name and contact information, as well as a National Provider Identifier number, Provider Transaction Access Number, email address, business hours, tax ID, and any additional information or documents applicable to the issue.

State Agency Inquiries

My office can make inquiries with federal agencies, however if you have an issue with a state agency or policy you will need to contact your State Representative, State Senator or the office of the Governor. You can find out who your representatives are at

<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/>. You may contact the Governor's office at <https://governor.alabama.gov/>.