

What Happened to the INS?

U.S. Immigration law is a complex, often illogical, and usually confusing web for the citizen of another country wishing to visit, or reside in, the US. Other than the most ordinary visitor visa, it can be difficult to attempt to negotiate it without qualified legal advice.

US Government Agencies involved in immigration:

Since 2001, there has been no “INS.” U.S. immigration laws are administered collectively by the US Department of State and by several separate agencies of the US Department of Homeland Security:

- a. The Department of State: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html. Through its overseas consulates and embassies, processes applications for non-immigrant visas, and those for immigrant visas approved by USCIS. The latter are sent by USCIS to the Department of State's central processing center in New Hampshire, (National Visa Center, or “NVC”) http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types_1309.html
- b. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (“CIS”): <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> processes applications for benefits, changes or adjustments of immigration status etc. within the US. It is the usual starting point for petitioners, either family or employer, seeking to obtain an immigrant visa for a foreign national.
- c. Customs and Border Protection, (CBP): Staffs US ports of entry, enforces customs regulations and makes the final the decision to admit, or refuse entrance to, a traveler to the United States. <http://www.cbp.gov/>. **(Having a US visa issued abroad does not guarantee admission at a port of entry!)**
- d. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), (Officially now known as “HSI”). <http://www.ice.gov/contact/ero/> Enforces immigration laws within the U.S. Its Detentions and Removals offices handle the arrest and processing for removal of foreign citizens found in the US without legal status.