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DHS OIG Urgently Recommends USCIS Halt Plans to Use the Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) for Naturalization Application Processing

Today, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG) recommended that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) stop plans to reinstate use of the Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) to process naturalization benefits for immigrants. The urgent recommendation stems from an ongoing review which discovered alarming security concerns regarding inadequate background checks and other functionality problems with ELIS. Rather than waiting several months to issue a report when the ongoing audit is completed, the OIG is taking the extraordinary step of elevating this urgent issue to USCIS leadership early so that immediate corrective action can be taken.

In August 2016, USCIS decided to discontinue the use of ELIS to process naturalization applications due to these problems. However, during its current review, the OIG learned of an impending decision by USCIS to return to ELIS processing in late January 2017. In [today's Management Alert](#), the DHS OIG recommends that USCIS not reinstate the use of ELIS to process N-400 naturalization applications until minimal technical and functional requirements are met and a risk-based analysis is conducted.

The DHS OIG's current ELIS review began in December 2016 as a result of USCIS' slow progress to address ELIS' functional and technical issues identified in previous OIG audits issued in March and November 2016. The [March 2016 audit, *USCIS Automation of Immigration Benefits Processing Remains Ineffective, OIG-16-48*](#), identified numerous deficiencies in system capabilities and problems with interfaces that negatively affected productivity. The [November 2016 audit, *Better Safeguards Are Needed in USCIS Green Card Issuance, OIG-17-11*](#), indicated that nearly 20,000 Green Cards had been issued in error, primarily due to ELIS technical and functional deficiencies.

"Due to the significant unresolved functional and technical issues surrounding ELIS—issues my office has reported on in numerous reports in the past—we strongly advise USCIS leadership against the premature return to electronic processing of naturalization applications until corrective actions are taken and these persistent issues are resolved," said Inspector General John Roth.

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