



## **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF IMMIGRATION JUDGES STATEMENT REGARDING POSSIBLE FURLOUGHS AT USCIS**

July 9, 2020

The National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ) stands in solidarity with the employees of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and decries the prospect of a furlough for these loyal government employees. The work performed by USCIS is an integral part of our nation's complex immigration system, which balances orderly legal immigration through the dedicated work of such employees at USCIS against enforcement and removal of those who do not qualify to remain. This Congressionally mandated balance is a delicate one, forged by lawmakers after much discussion and debate. Hobbling USCIS and preventing it from pursuing its mission by furloughs of its workforce is short-sighted and misguided. It harms U.S. citizens who seek to be united with family members harms U.S. businesses, large and small, in need of workers to fill jobs Americans do not choose to fill, and harms those seeking refuge from persecution abroad.

During times like now, when immigration is a divisive public issue, agencies like USCIS and the Immigration Court are plagued by the pernicious intrusion of politics into what should otherwise be neutral government functions. As with the Immigration Court and Immigration Judges, it is the role of USCIS employees to carry out their part in applying the laws Congress has enacted.

Based on our past experience with government furloughs, we know firsthand that furloughs are a disservice to the public and a waste of public resources. Those who are entitled by law to access services are deprived of that opportunity in a timely manner. Meanwhile, the work of employees who are furloughed piles up and it takes months, or even years, to clear the backlog and restore proper levels of service. The public should not have to pay this price. Accordingly, the National Association of Immigration Judges urges Congress to support our fellow federal government employees by providing adequate funding to avoid unnecessary and counterproductive furloughs.