



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF IMMIGRATION JUDGES

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To Whom It May Concern:

The National Association of Immigration Judges (NAIJ) is a voluntary organization formed in 1971 with the objectives of promoting independence and enhancing the professionalism, dignity, and efficiency of the Immigration Court. We are the recognized collective bargaining representative of the more than 250 Immigration Judges located in 58 courts throughout the United States.

Our nation's Immigration Court system currently faces overwhelming case backlogs, lengthy delays and a critical shortage of resources. Reforms that would strategically reduce our caseload would serve to improve our overall functioning, enhance efficiency and aid in allowing us to maintain our commitment to provide due process to all who appear before us.

We have been asked to comment on the proposal currently being considered which would provide DHS asylum officers with the authority to issue a decision granting asylum to deserving cases which they encounter in the course of the "credible fear determination" interviews (those which are conducted for arriving asylum seekers at ports of entry and land borders). The present system requires these cases be referred to the Immigration Courts even when the interviewing officer believes legal standards for a grant have been satisfied. Streamlining this procedure would provide a win-win situation where deserving applicants receive decisions in a shorter time frame, thereby reducing detention costs, and would spare the Immigration Courts the additional pressure these cases add to an impossibly overcrowded docket.

NAIJ strongly endorses initiatives such as this which increase efficiency while preserving due process for those involved.

Very truly yours,

Dana Leigh Marks

Dana Leigh Marks, President