

General, decisions of the Board, and decisions of the Attorney General, shall be binding on all officers and employees of the Department of Homeland Security or immigration judges in the administration of the immigration laws of the United States. By majority vote of the permanent Board members, selected decisions of the Board rendered by a three-member panel or by the Board en banc may be designated to serve as precedents in all proceedings involving the same issue or issues. Selected decisions designated by the Board, decisions of the Attorney General, and decisions of the Secretary of Homeland Security to the extent authorized in paragraph (i) of this section, shall serve as precedents in all proceedings involving the same issue or issues.

(h) *Referral of cases to the Attorney General.* (1) The Board shall refer to the Attorney General for review of its decision all cases which:

(i) The Attorney General directs the Board to refer to him.

(ii) The Chairman or a majority of the Board believes should be referred to the Attorney General for review.

(iii) The Secretary of Homeland Security, or specific officials of the Department of Homeland Security designated by the Secretary with the concurrence of the Attorney General, refers to the Attorney General for review.

(2) In any case the Attorney General decides, the Attorney General's decision shall be stated in writing and shall be transmitted to the Board or Secretary, as appropriate, for transmittal and service as provided in paragraph (f) of this section.

(i) *Publication of Secretary's precedent decisions.* The Secretary of Homeland Security, or specific officials of the Department of Homeland Security designated by the Secretary with the concurrence of the Attorney General, may file with the Attorney General Service precedent decisions as set forth in §103.3(c).

[68 FR 9832, Feb. 28, 2003]

PART 109 [RESERVED]

PART 204—IMMIGRANT PETITIONS

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§204.1 General information about immediate relative and family-sponsored petitions.

(a) *Types of petitions.* Petitions may be filed for an alien's classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act or as a preference immigrant under section 203(a) of the Act based on a qualifying relationship to a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States, as follows:

(1) A citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States petitioning under section 204(a)(1)(A)(i) or 204(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Act for a qualifying relative's classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act or as a preference immigrant under section 203(a) of the Act must

file a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative. These petitions are described in § 204.2;

(2) A widow or widower of a United States citizen self-petitioning under section 204(a)(1)(A)(ii) of the Act as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act must file a Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow, or Special Immigrant. These petitions are described in § 204.2;

(3) A spouse or child of an abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States self-petitioning under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act for classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act or as a preference immigrant under section 203(a) of the Act must file a Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow, or Special Immigrant. These petitions are described in § 204.2;

(4) A citizen of the United States seeking advanced processing of an orphan petition must file Form I-600A, Application for Advanced Processing of Orphan Petition. A citizen of the United States petitioning under section 204(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Act for classification of an orphan described in section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Act as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act must file Form I-600, Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative. These applications and petitions are described in § 204.3; and

(5) Any person filing a petition under section 204(f) of the Act as, or on behalf of, an Amerasian for classification as an immediate relative under section 201(b) of the Act or as a preference immigrant under section 203(a)(1) or 203(a)(3) of the Act must file a Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow, or Special Immigrant. These petitions are described in § 204.4.

(b) *Filing fee.* Forms I-130 and I-360 must be accompanied by the appropriate fee under 8 CFR 103.7(b)(1).

(c) *Filing date.* The filing date of a petition shall be the date it is properly filed under paragraph (d) of this section and shall constitute the priority date.

(d) *Proper filing.* A petition shall be considered properly filed if:

(1) It is signed by the petitioner, and

(2) A fee has been received by the Service office or United States Consular office having jurisdiction.

(3) If, during normal processing, a delay results from deficiencies in the initial filing, the priority date will be established only when the petition is properly signed by the petitioner and the fee has been collected by the Service. If questions arise concerning the filing of the petition which cannot be resolved through a check of the Service fee receipting system (FARES) or other fee collection system, then the director may consider the date of receipt of the petition to be the priority date.

(e) *Jurisdiction*—(1) *Petitioner or self-petitioner residing in the United States.* The petition or self-petition must be filed with the Service office having jurisdiction over the place where the petitioner or self-petitioner is residing. When the petition or self-petition is accompanied by an application for adjustment of status, the petition or self-petition may be filed with the Service office having jurisdiction over the beneficiary's or self-petitioner's place of residence.

(2) *Petitioner residing in certain countries abroad.* The Service has overseas offices located in Vienna, Austria; Frankfurt, Germany; Athens, Greece; Hong Kong; New Delhi, India; Rome, Italy; Nairobi, Kenya; Seoul, Korea; Ciudad Juarez, Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Tijuana, Mexico; Manila, the Philippines; Singapore; Bangkok, Thailand; and London, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. If the petitioner resides in one of these countries, the petition must be filed with the Service office located in that country. The beneficiary does not have to reside in the same jurisdiction as the petitioner for the Service to accept the petition. The overseas Service officer may accept and adjudicate a petition filed by a petitioner who does not reside within the office's jurisdiction when it is established that emergent or humanitarian reasons for acceptance exist or when it is in the national interest. An overseas Service officer may not accept or approve a self-petition filed by the spouse or child of an abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii),

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204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act. These self-petitions must be filed with the Service office in the United States having jurisdiction over the self-petitioner's place of residence in the United States.

(3) *Jurisdiction assumed by United States consular officer.* United States consular officers assigned to visa-issuing posts abroad, except those in countries listed in paragraph (e)(2) of this section, are authorized to accept and approve a relative petition or a petition filed by a widow or widower if the petitioner resides in the area over which the post has jurisdiction, regardless of the beneficiary's residence or physical presence at the time of filing. In emergent or humanitarian cases and cases in the national interest, the United States consular officer may accept a petition filed by a petitioner who does not reside within the consulate's jurisdiction. While consular officers are authorized to approve petitions, they must refer any petition which is not clearly approvable to the appropriate Service office. Consular officers may consult with the appropriate Service office abroad prior to stateside referral, if they deem it necessary. A consular official may not accept or approve a self-petition filed by the spouse or child of an abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act. These self-petitions must be filed with the Service office in the United States having jurisdiction over the self-petitioner's place of residence in the United States.

(f) *Supporting documentation.* (1) Documentary evidence consists of those documents which establish the United States citizenship or lawful permanent resident status of the petitioner and the claimed relationship of the petitioner to the beneficiary. They must be in the form of primary evidence, if available. When it is established that primary evidence is not available, secondary evidence may be accepted. To determine the availability of primary documents, the Service will refer to the Department of State's Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). When the FAM shows that primary documents are gen-

erally available in the country of issue but the petitioner claims that his or her document is unavailable, a letter from the appropriate registrar stating that the document is not available will not be required before the Service will accept secondary evidence. The Service will consider any credible evidence relevant to a self-petition filed by a qualified spouse or child of an abusive citizen or lawful permanent resident under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act. The self-petitioner may, but is not required to, demonstrate that preferred primary or secondary evidence is unavailable. The determination of what evidence is credible and the weight to be given that evidence shall be within the sole discretion of the Service.

(2) Original documents or legible, true copies of original documents are acceptable. The Service reserves the right to require submission of original documents when deemed necessary. Documents submitted with the petition will not be returned to the petitioner, except when originals are requested by the Service. If original documents are requested by the Service, they will be returned to the petitioner after a decision on the petition has been rendered, unless their validity or authenticity is in question. When an interview is required, all original documents must be presented for examination at the interview.

(3) Foreign language documents must be accompanied by an English translation which has been certified by a competent translator.

(g) *Evidence of petitioner's United States citizenship or lawful permanent residence—(1) Primary evidence.* A petition must be accompanied by one of the following:

(i) A birth certificate that was issued by a civil authority and that establishes the petitioner's birth in the United States;

(ii) An unexpired United States passport issued initially for a full ten-year period to a petitioner over the age of eighteen years as a citizen of the United States (and not merely as a noncitizen national);

(iii) An unexpired United States passport issued initially for a full five-year

period to the petitioner under the age of eighteen years as a citizen of the United States (and not merely as a noncitizen national);

(iv) A statement executed by a United States consular officer certifying the petitioner to be a United States citizen and the bearer of a currently valid United States passport;

(v) The petitioner's Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship;

(vi) Department of State Form FS-240, Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States, relating to the petitioner;

(vii) The petitioner's Form I-551, Permanent Resident Card, or other proof given by the Service as evidence of lawful permanent residence. Photocopies of Form I-551 or of a Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of Citizenship may be submitted as evidence of status as a lawfully permanent resident or United States citizen, respectively.

(2) *Secondary evidence.* If primary evidence is unavailable, the petitioner must present secondary evidence. Any evidence submitted as secondary evidence will be evaluated for authenticity and credibility. Secondary evidence may include, but is not limited to, one or more of the following documents:

(i) A baptismal certificate with the seal of the church, showing the date and place of birth in the United States and the date of baptism;

(ii) Affidavits sworn to by persons who were living at the time and who have personal knowledge of the event to which they attest. The affidavits must contain the affiant's full name and address, date and place of birth, relationship to the parties, if any, and complete details concerning how the affiant acquired knowledge of the event;

(iii) Early school records (preferably from the first school) showing the date of admission to the school, the child's date and place of birth, and the name(s) and place(s) of birth of the parent(s);

(iv) Census records showing the name, place of birth, and date of birth or age of the petitioner; or

(v) If it is determined that it would cause unusual delay or hardship to obtain documentary proof of birth in the United States, a United States citizen petitioner who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States and who is serving outside the United States may submit a statement from the appropriate authority of the Armed Forces. The statement should attest to the fact that the personnel records of the Armed Forces show that the petitioner was born in the United States on a certain date.

(3) *Evidence submitted with a self-petition.* If a self-petitioner filing under section 204(a)(1)(A)(iii), 204(a)(1)(A)(iv), 204(a)(1)(B)(ii), or 204(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Act is unable to present primary or secondary evidence of the abuser's status, the Service will attempt to electronically verify the abuser's citizenship or immigration status from information contained in Service computerized records. Other Service records may also be reviewed at the discretion of the adjudicating officer. If the Service is unable to identify a record as relating to the abuser or the record does not establish the abuser's immigration or citizenship status, the self-petition will be adjudicated based on the information submitted by the self-petitioner.

(h) *Requests for additional documentation.* When the Service determines that the evidence is not sufficient, an explanation of the deficiency will be provided and additional evidence will be requested. The petitioner will be given 60 days to present additional evidence, to withdraw the petition, to request a decision based on the evidence submitted, or to request additional time to respond. If the director determines that the initial 60-day period is insufficient to permit the presentation of additional documents, the director may provide an additional 60 days for the submission. The total time shall not exceed 120 days, unless unusual circumstances exist. Failure to respond to a request for additional evidence will result in a decision based on the evidence previously submitted.

[57 FR 41056, Sept. 9, 1992, as amended at 58 FR 48778, Sept. 20, 1993; 61 FR 13072, 13073, Mar. 26, 1996; 63 FR 70315, Dec. 21, 1998]