

Frequently Asked Questions about my office

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One of the most important jobs I have as a Congressman, is helping my constituents when they are having problems with Federal agencies. Here are a few quick questions to help you determine if I can assist you in your case: **Do you reside in the Fifth Congressional District of the State of Maryland?**

Congressional courtesy, ethics rules and propriety dictate that each Member of Congress has the honor and responsibility to serve his or her own constituents. If you aren't sure which district you live in, please enter your zip code on the top left of [the House webpage](#) .

Does your situation involve a Federal agency?

As a Federal representative, I am able to make inquiries of Federal agencies. If your case involves state, county, or local government, your public school district or other public agencies, please visit http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?ln_url=http://www.maryland.gov&ln_dc=Maryland.gov for contact information of local representatives.

Does the case you are concerned about involve you?

Due to the Federal Privacy Act of 1974, we must have the written consent of a constituent in order to make an official inquiry. However, I will be happy to listen to your concerns regarding a constituent who is having difficulty. Please contact either my Waldorf Office which serves Charles and St. Mary's County or Greenbelt District Office which serves Prince George's, Calvert and Anne Arundel Counties ([contact my office](#)) and outline the situation so that we may determine if we can be of assistance.

Is your situation a legal dispute?

As a member of the Legislative Branch, I am unable to become involved in court cases or legal issues. This restriction is due to the Separation of Powers as outlined in the Constitution. This restriction applies to both civil and criminal matters.

Is your case within the agency's normal processing time?

It is rare that a case can be expedited for any reason other than extreme hardship. If you believe your situation merits faster processing, please contact the appropriate District Office. My staff will discuss your situation and help you determine if we can be of assistance. If you feel that your case has been "lost in the system" we can make an inquiry on your behalf.

What assistance can you expect from my office?

Once you have determined I can assist you in your situation, please feel free to contact either my Waldorf or Greenbelt district offices via US postal mail, fax, telephone, or in person. For my office to assist you your inquiry must be made via mail or fax, as long as there is a signature for privacy reasons. Please include any case or alien numbers that relate to the inquiry.

My office is here to assist constituents with problems involving a federal agency. Although I am unable to assure a specific outcome regarding a particular case, I may make inquiries as to the status of your case, obtain additional information, or direct you to appropriate resources or services. My role is to assure you a fair and thorough review of your case and to seek a timely response from the agency. While I will make my best efforts to assist you, please remember that federal agencies have discretion concerning decisions on individual cases and have the final say on the outcome. **Help With a Federal Agency**

As your representative, I am committed to helping you resolve any problems you may have with a federal agency. Some of these problems may include difficulty obtaining social security or veterans' benefits, applying for U.S. citizenship, or receiving an income tax refund. This section of my website will help you find the answers to your problems.

Click on the following links for information and answers to the most common problems constituents face with federal agencies.

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[Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#) — including questions on how to receive retirement or disability benefits.

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[Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#) — including information on service and non-service connected benefits and survivor benefits.

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[Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) — including information on how to contact the IRS and the Tax Advocates Office how to get answers to federal income tax questions

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[Federal Employee/Retirees](#) — including information on disability retirement, survivor benefits, and changing your beneficiary.

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[Passport/Visa](#) Problems pertaining to emergency passports issuances all visa questions and problems—employment based and family based.

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[Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) — including information on legalization, naturalization, and visitor, student, or business visas.

Help Filing a Case with My Office

If you did not find the information you were looking for either on my website or by contacting the federal agency directly, I encourage you to open a case with my office so we may assist you in this process. I have provided information below on how to file a case with my office.

Once you have determined that your problem is one with which I can be of assistance, you should follow the steps listed below to gather necessary information and material before you contact my office. This will help my staff to assist you more efficiently.

STEP ONE: Complete a Personal Authorization Form

Under the Federal Privacy Act of 1974, we must have a signed privacy release form ([Please contact the correct district office \(Waldorf or Greenbelt\) to request a form](#)

or [download it here](#)) outlining your problem or a signed letter which clearly states your issue. This provides our office permission to look into the matter on your behalf. Please send the SIGNED release form or letter to the appropriate District Office via US Postal Service, fax or deliver it in person. Please include any relevant case or alien numbers and supporting documents which relate to your inquiry. WE CAN NOT ACCEPT EMAILS UNLESS THEY HAVE YOUR ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE.

STEP TWO: Gather necessary paperwork

You must provide my staff with any paperwork you have regarding your case. This might include letters from the agency, medical forms, and other forms and documents relating to your problem.

The agencies listed below require additional information. My staff will need this before they can make inquiries on your behalf:

- **Internal Revenue Service Cases:** The IRS uses its own Authorization Form which you must complete before they will respond to an inquiry from my office. You can either print this form by clicking the link below, or request one through the mail by calling my office at 1-800-866-2701.
- **Office of Personnel Management Cases:** The OPM uses your CSA or CSF number as well as your Social Security number, and, in some cases your Date of Birth is helpful. To report the death of an annuitant and to apply for survivor benefits, you will need the death certificate.
- **Social Security Cases:** You need to apply for Social Security Disability benefits (SSD) before you contact my office. Once you have applied, my staff will need to have information on the office at which you filed your claim or appeal and where you are in the process.
- **Veterans Affairs Cases:** For these cases your C# would be helpful along with your Social Security Number.
- **Workers' Comp Cases:** Your case number along with your Social Security Number will help us track your case.
- **Immigration Cases:** Need a alien number and case number

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION ON FEDERAL AGENCIES: Social Security Administration (SSA)

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is the agency that deals with your retirement benefits as well as Social Security Disability (SSD), Supplemental Social Security (SSI), burial expense,

survivor, and dependent benefits.

Visit the [Social Security Administration webpage](#) for more information.

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Veterans Affairs (VA)

The Department of Veterans Affairs is the agency that deals with Veterans benefits. These include life insurance, service connected and non-service connected disability, health care benefits, health care benefits and burial in a Veteran cemetery. Health care benefits include insurance, hospital, nursing home and at home assisted care.

Visit the [US Department of Veteran's Affairs Webpage](#) for more information.

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Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

What is the local IRS phone number?

While the local IRS phone number is no longer listed in the phone book, you can call their toll free number, **1 (800) 865-6198**—you can also call the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service at **(401) 547-6537**

or

1-800-501-0050

9 AM-1PM Monday-Friday. You will go through an electronic list and eventually be directed to a representative who can assist you with most questions.

[Click here to download the IRS authorization form.](#)

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Federal Employee/Retirees

The agencies that deal with federal employment include the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Office of Workers' Compensation (OWCP), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

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[OPM](#) deals with federal employment and retirement, life and health insurance and survivor benefits.

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[OWCP](#) is the agency which handles federal worker's injury compensation claims.

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[EEOC](#) is the agency which processes discrimination complaints. Most federal agencies have their own EEOC process which should be pursued before filing with the EEOC itself.

- [MSPB](#) protects the integrity of the Federal merit systems and the rights of Federal employees working in the systems.

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Passport/Visa

The Department of State is the agency responsible for issuing passports and visitor visas. Responsible for maintaining our diplomatic presence in foreign countries, the State Department also provides services to American citizens abroad, including issuing Certificates of Birth Overseas to children of American citizens born while their parents were living in a foreign country.

The phone number to call and check about passports doesn't work or my phone is blocked so I can't call. What can I do?

There are two phone numbers you can try: **1-900-225-5674** or for the hearing impaired (TDD) **1-900-225-7778**

. These calls will be automatically charged to your phone bill. If you can't make this call because

of a block on your phone you should call

1-888-362-8668

(TDD

1-888-498-3648

) and have your credit card ready. You should have your full name, date of birth, where and when you applied, and when you are traveling ready for the representative.

If you still cannot call for whatever reason or you find there is a problem with your application, please feel free to call my office at **(301) 474-0119 Greenbelt or (301) 845-1577 Waldorf.**

I would like a friend/relative from a foreign country to come visit me for the summer.

What steps do my friend and I have to take?

The Department of State web page details [what kind of visa your friend or relative may apply for](#) and also has [a list of all the U.S. Embassies, Consulates](#).

. Generally, your friend or relative will need to come prepared to prove they are not planning on immigrating to the United States. He or she should provide evidence of property, financial statements, ties to the community through work, organizations they belong to, and ties to family and friends. You may have to act as the sponsor for your friend or relative, meaning you can prove you will be financially responsible for your guest. You should know that members of congress can not request that a Consular denial can not be overturned, but we can enquire further into reasons for denial.

I would like to get my tourist/student/business visa extended. What do I need to do?

You should first contact the closest foreign consulate office for detailed instructions. Extension of your visa will depend on whether or not you have a valid passport and what the date stamped on your I-94 form states.

I am a U.S. citizen who recently gave birth to a child in a foreign country. How do I apply for citizenship for my child?

The birth of a child abroad to U.S. citizen parent(s) should be reported as soon as possible to the [nearest American consular office](#) for the purpose of establishing an official record of the child's claim to U.S. citizenship at birth. The official record is in the form of a Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America. This document, referred to as the Consular Report of Birth or FS-240, is considered a basic United States citizenship document.

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US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS)

USCIS deals with legal entry and legalization of aliens and the naturalization of legal residents. This is the agency that grants extension of non-immigrant visas.

I filed a case with USCIS and have not heard anything? How can I check on the status of my case?

The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has made it much easier for you to check on the status of your case. Please visit the USCIS website by clicking on the link below to find specific information on your application. All you need to enter is your 13 character application number.

[Click here](#) to check on the status of your case.

I would like to apply or petition for immigrant benefits but don't know what forms I need to send in to USCIS? Where do I go to find these forms?

USCIS has an online Forms, Fees, and Fingerprints section on its website with links to any form you will need to apply or petition for immigration benefits. Many of these forms (benefit applications and petitions) require the payment of a fee in order for USCIS to process (adjudicate) your requests. Some also require applicants to pay an additional and separate fee for fingerprinting. We recommend that you obtain all of your forms by downloading (printing) them from this Website. This ensures that you are using the most up-to-date version of the form which is available. However, if you do not want to download a form, you may order immigration forms by phone at **1 (800) 870-3676**.

[Click here](#) to access the online Forms, Fees, and Fingerprints Gallery.

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