

**OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
MESSAGE FROM OIED TO DEANS & DEPARTMENT CHAIRS/PROGRAM DIRECTORS  
ON THE NEW USCIS SUSPENSION OF H-1B PREMIUM PROCESSING  
March 6, 2017**

**Last Friday, March 3, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that the agency will suspend Premium Processing for all H-1B petitions filed on or after April 3, 2017. The announcement is viewable at: <https://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/uscis-will-temporarily-suspend-premium-processing-all-h-1b-petitions>. USCIS did not provide an end date for the suspension, but indicated that it may last for six months.**

**Which H-1B petitions are impacted?**

All H-1B petitions are subject to the suspension, regardless of whether the petitioner is an institution of higher education. This includes petitions requesting a change of status to H-1B, consular notification of an approved H-1B petition, or an extension of H-1B status. Further, after April 3, a petitioner can't request an upgrade to premium processing of a pending H-1B petition until such time as the premium processing service is reinstated.

**How long does regular processing of H-1B petitions take?**

Regular processing is currently taking 6-8 months. However, USCIS' goal in suspending premium processing is to relegate additional resources to reduce the time it takes to process H-1B petitions. Thus, we may see a reduction over the course of the next several months in the amount of time USCIS takes to process H-1B petitions.

**What is a department to do now?**

There must be an assessment as to which H-1B petitions must be processed by way of premium processing in order to best ensure a foreign national-employee's uninterrupted authorization to work. Primarily, the suspension will impact those foreign nationals that need to change or extend their nonimmigrant status to H-1B in order to be authorized to work by a date that falls within the next six months. Please contact Adam Julian ([julianal@appstate.edu](mailto:julianal@appstate.edu)) in OIED to discuss whether or not premium processing is needed or if you feel that one of your employees could be affected. Any requests to file a H-1B petition with premium processing before the April 3rd deadline must be made to OIED along with all required supporting documentation by March 15. Please note that university checks are issued within two weeks of being requested.

All employees hired by Appalachian after April 3rd and who will require a H-1B visa to begin employment will take a minimum of 6 months from the date the candidate accepts the offer of employment before the candidate can acquire H-1B status. There may be other ways in which a foreign national can be authorized to begin employment at Appalachian such as Post-completion OPT or a TN Visa etc.. If a candidate selected following a search indicates that they will require immigration support please contact Adam Julian ([julianal@appstate.edu](mailto:julianal@appstate.edu)) to explore the possible options.

Please note that there are certain provisions that will alleviate or limit the impact of this suspension on those foreign nationals that currently hold H-1B status and need to extend their H-1B status or change their H-1B employer.

Finally, the suspension of premium processing for H-1B petitions may impact the international travel plans of some foreign nationals.

This suspension on premium processing does not extend to other visa petitions and categories such as permanent residency. This only applies to premium processing for the H-1B category.

As always, OIED will do its best to support your department.