

## **Effective Feb. 1, Form I-130 Petitions Only Processed Domestically by USCIS or Internationally by DOS**

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Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, one of the most widely filed USCIS forms, is filed by a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident petitioning for an immediate or close relative intending to immigrate to the United States. Until now, petitioners had the option of filing Form I-130 with the USCIS, directly with the USCIS international field offices abroad, or a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad, if they could prove an exceptional circumstance.

Without any notice, [USCIS announced](#) on Jan. 31, 2020, that starting on Feb. 1, it will no longer accept and adjudicate Form I-130 petitions at its international field offices except the USCIS field offices in Accra, Ghana, and London, England. These two offices will continue to accept and adjudicate Forms I-130 petitions until April 1, 2020. Going forward, I-130 petitions will only be processed domestically by USCIS or internationally by the Department of State in certain circumstances. This decision likely serves a dual purpose. USCIS wants to encourage and expand online filing options. I-130 online filing became available Oct. 30, 2019, allowing petitioners to submit forms electronically, check the status of their cases, and receive notices from USCIS. This decision also transfers the international workload to the State Department, as USCIS plans to close 13 international field offices between now and August 2020.

This latest move could affect everyone from members of the U.S. military applying for citizenship to foreigners seeking to join their relatives in the United States. The I-130 wait time at many international USCIS field offices is less than a month, compared with an average of 7–15 months at a domestic USCIS field office.

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