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USCIS Announces New Measures to Reduce Immigration Backlog

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On March 29, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced three measures that seek to reduce wait times, expand premium processing to additional form types, and streamline the process for those waiting for employment authorization documents.

- **Reduce wait times:** USCIS is establishing new internal cycle time goals to be achieved by September 2023. USCIS will expand staffing and modernize its processes through the use of new technology.

- **Expand premium processing:** Historically, premium processing has only been available to petitioners filing Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, and to certain employment-based immigrant visa petitioners filing Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers. This final rule expands premium processing services, giving applicants the option to pay between $1,500 and $2,500 to expedite their applications. This measure goes into effect in 60 days, and USCIS will follow a phased approach to implement premium processing for the following cases:

    - Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers:

        - EB-1 Multinational Executive or Manager

        - EB-2 Member of Professions Holding an Advanced Degree or Exceptional Ability seeking a National Interest Waiver (NIW)

    - I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status

    - I-765, Application for Employment Authorization

- **Streamline process for Employment Authorization Documents (EAD):** In an effort to ensure that certain individuals do not lose employment authorization while their EAD applications are pending, USCIS seeks to increase the automatic extension period for EAD renewals. Currently, most applicants wait over 10 months for their EAD renewals to be issued.

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