

Washington, D.C. - Congressman David Price (D-NC), along with officials from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today broke ground on a new Triangle facility to serve central North Carolina's growing population of immigrants applying for citizenship and residency status adjustments. Previously, North Carolina residents had to trek to an overburdened Charlotte facility to apply for immigration services. Recognizing the need for a new office, Price had worked for years to encourage USCIS to look to the Triangle for the placement of a satellite office. The new facility is scheduled to open to the public in March 2008.

Below are Congressman Price's remarks at the groundbreaking.

It is a pleasure to join everyone for this important and long-sought celebration.

As we know from the ongoing debate in Washington, immigration is one of the most consuming and high profile issues in our public discourse. I am hopeful that the current proposal before the Congress will be improved and finally lead to a solution for our country's enormous immigration challenges. Comprehensive reform is desperately needed to fix the mismatch between official policy and our labor market needs, a mismatch that has left immigrants, their families and employers alike in an untenable situation.

But today is not about that national debate. Rather, we are here to mark a major improvement in our local immigration service and a path-breaking project that will set a new standard nationwide. We have long known that the Triangle needs a field immigration office. Our diverse economy and good quality of life draw workers of every skill level and many backgrounds from all around the world.

I know this by personal experience. I employ two people in my local offices to work on the constant flow of immigration cases, and approximately 80 percent of each staffer's time is devoted to such casework.

For several years, North Carolina has had the highest number of applicants and petitioners for immigration services and benefits in the nation. Applicants and petitioners in the Triangle and eastern part of the state faced an additional burden beyond lines, paperwork, and backlogs – the long trips back and forth between their homes and Charlotte.

We felt strongly that if any state should receive a USCIS sub-office, it should be North Carolina. So we set out to make our case for a Triangle immigration office. It was a long uphill struggle that involved many people and agencies along the way. But after 10 years of increasing needs, extensive efforts and persistence, we are finally here today to break ground.

I am proud to be a part of this event today and look forward to the near future when those who have come to our country to better their lives and enhance our society can complete their immigration process right here, in our own community. We are lucky to live amid such diversity. We hope this office will make those seeking legal status feel even more welcome here.

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