

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3313

November 17, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records
Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740

Dear President Biden and Mr. Ferriero,

I respectfully ask that your administration take necessary and immediate action to reopen the Federal Records Centers (FRCs) in the Kansas City, Missouri area to full operations as quickly as possible. Since March 2020, those facilities' continued limited operations have imperiled the ability of my office to serve the people of North Carolina's 13th Congressional District. Specifically, my office is struggling to process immigration related requests because the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has had only partial and interrupted access to the tens of millions of Alien (or "A-files") it stores at these FRCs administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). As you know, A-files are a prerequisite for the USCIS to begin considering an immigrant for naturalization.

As of September 29, 2021 some Kansas City area FRCs were still in a closed status, while others were operating at Phase 1 status which entails up to 20% staff occupancy. That continued diminished operational capacity has wrought significant consequences and slowdowns on the efficacy and speed of our nation's legal immigration system. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kansas City area FRCs provided the USCIS with an average of 62,000 A-files per month. However, those same FRCs are now only able to provide USCIS with a fraction—11,000 files per month—of that volume. Alarming, as of September of 2021, the USCIS had approximately 327,000 A-file requests pending with the Kansas City area FRCs.

Our nation has come a long way in its battle against COVID-19 and its ensuing pandemic. Three safe and effective vaccines are readily available to and free for the American public. Many workers, owing to the nature and critical importance of their work, were never able to move to remote workdays and had to stay at their posts. Additionally, many other workers have either fully returned or are in the process of returning to their offices. Given the wide availability of safe and effective vaccines as well as the absolutely paramount significance of the work the USCIS provides, the Kansas City area FRCs need to open to full capacity as quickly as is feasibly possible.

To that end, I request that your administration work with the NARA and relevant health agencies to develop a plan to return these FRCs to 100% staffing capacity. Furthermore, I request that the NARA work specifically with the USCIS to determine the most prudent and expedited way to address the prodigious records backlog and report back to Congress once that plan is formulated.

The residents of North Carolina's 13th Congressional District and legal immigrants across the country deserve competency and timeliness from the federal agencies which their tax dollars fund. They have had to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and continue doing their jobs. It seems only fair that their government does the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ted Budd', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ted Budd
Member of Congress