



January 30, 2022

Samantha Deshommès, Chief
Office of Policy and Strategy, Regulatory Coordination Division,
Department of Homeland Security
US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW.
Washington, DC 20529-2020

Submitted Via: Federal eRulemaking Portal Website

Re: USCIS Proposed Rule Including Genealogy Index Search Request and Genealogy Records Request
Docket ID USCIS-2006-0013
OMB Control Number 1615-0096

Position: Support if Amended

Dear Ms. Deshommès:

The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies *is the* umbrella organization of 92 genealogical societies and Jewish historical societies worldwide whose approximately 9,500 members are actively researching their Jewish roots. We want to ensure that our members will be allowed continued and maximum access to these records of genealogical importance. Our members use them for providing help in researching family history and tracing inherited medical conditions. The IAJGS and its predecessor organization were formed in 1988 to provide a common voice for issues of significance to its members and to advance our genealogical avocation. One of our primary objectives is to promote public access to genealogically relevant records. Our 42nd consecutive annual International Conference on Jewish Genealogy (<https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2022/index.cfm>) will be held in Philadelphia, PA in August 2022.

We are writing in response to the proposed regulation regarding Genealogy Index Search Request and Genealogy Records Request. The proposed rule asks for comments in specified areas. Our comments specific to the proposed regulation are limited to the two forms G-1041 and G-1041A and their desirability under the current genealogy program. We further are suggesting that records be transferred to the National Archives.

While our members are societies, not individuals, our members' members are individuals- both individual business and hobbyist genealogists. Access to the genealogical records and using the genealogy index and records requests are critical to their family research. Others in the genealogical community such as historians, researchers and social scientists, heir location researchers, and more are also involved with using these indices and records.

As we expressed in our letter of June 20, 2016, responding to the proposed fee increases for the Genealogy Program we urged the records be transferred to the National Archives as soon as possible so that the records are freely accessible to the public. Once at the National Archives, the public would also be relieved of any financial burden to access the records.

However, for the time the genealogy records remain at USCIS, and the two forms are to be continued, we support the continued use of forms to simplify and improve the process for genealogists.

On files less than 100-years old, we understand the requirement to show proof of death for the alien. However, we do not understand the need to redact information about others mentioned in the file. We point out that the 1950 U. S. Census will be released 1 April 2022 after 72-years. We do not agree with the redaction of others mentioned on the forms. Others mentioned in the records assist family historians and others in researching the family members and can be critical when tracing inherited medical conditions. Other government agencies including NARA treat historical information with less stringent privacy rules. By not spending time doing the redactions, costs are saved which could reduce the fees charged.

The U.S., Surgeon General has recommended that everyone create a family health history for three generations (<http://kahuna.clayton.edu/jgu/FHH/html/fhh.html?action=create#>). The form specifically asks about Ashkenazi Jewish Heritage due to the increased risk the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes carry for breast, ovarian and pancreatic cancer and for men prostate and pancreatic cancer. BreastCancer.org states Ashkenazi women who know they have a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene and women who inherit a mutation in either of these genes — from their mothers or their fathers — have a much higher-than-average risk of developing breast cancer and/or ovarian cancer. One in 40 Ashkenazi Jewish women have a BRCA gene mutation.
(https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/young_women/bringyourbrave/hereditary_breast_cancer/jewish_women_brca.htm#)

Five %-10% of breast cancers are thought to be hereditary, meaning the cancer is linked to mutations in genes passed from parent to child (<https://www.breastcancer.org/research-news/ashkenazi-brca-status-and-bc-outcomes#>). This supports the need for family historians to have easy and affordable access to the genealogy index and records.

IAJGS reminds USCIS that regulators require the transfer of records created before 1950 to the National Archives. We note that all such records have not yet been transferred, and encourage their prompt transfer and the establishment of a system for automatic annual transfer.

IAJGS also supports any improvements which make the service to genealogists more-timely and the process more efficient, thus potentially lowering the costs.

With the above-mentioned amendments to the proposed regulation, we would support the proposal.

IAJGS is a sponsoring member of the Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC), and we support their statement on these proposed regulations.

Thank you for your consideration.

If we can be of any assistance to the deliberations please feel free to contact Jan Meisels Allen at the email address or phone number below.

Sincerely,

A black and white image of a handwritten signature, which appears to be "Jane Berenbeim", followed by a horizontal line.

Jane Berenbeim
President, IAJGS

A black and white image of a handwritten signature, which appears to be "Jan Meisels Allen", written in a cursive style.

Jan Meisels Allen
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Monitoring Committee
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