

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 14, 2009

Thomas G. Snow, Acting Director  
Executive Office of Immigration Review  
United States Department of Justice  
Office of Legislative and Public Affairs  
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 1902  
Falls Church, VA 22041

John P. Torres, Acting Assistant Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
425 I Street, NW, Room 7030  
Washington, DC 20536

Acting Director Snow and Acting Assistant Secretary Torres:

Last week, our offices learned that the Cincinnati hearing location of the United States Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) was scheduled to close on April 6, 2009. We understand that individuals with cases currently pending before the Cincinnati hearing location are now required to travel to Cleveland where they will not appear before a judge but participate in a videoconference. We strongly urge the reversal of this decision. The EOIR and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have yet to offer a satisfactory explanation for this action's necessity.

We are concerned that this closure will increase the cost of an already expensive immigration process and threaten to diminish the quality of representation available to those with cases before the EOIR. Attorneys, plaintiffs, witnesses and others will be forced to travel up to ten hours to participate in a hearing via videoconference. Due to this heightened burden, the most qualified attorneys may no longer be willing to represent those most in need of effective advocacy. There are also potential repercussions for the broader community, as the closure will affect the residents, businesses, and institutions associated with the hearing office.

We understand and support the need for efficiency in government, but the decision to close the Cincinnati hearing location is an action of such magnitude that it merits a full disclosure of available information and a discussion among stakeholders, especially members of Congress whose constituents are directly affected. Neither the EOIR nor the U.S. ICE undertook efforts to solicit input or receive comments from our offices regarding this decision.

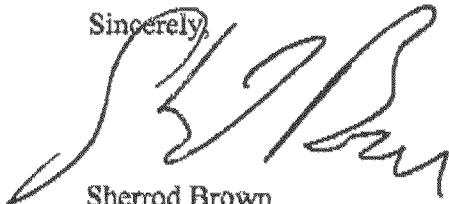
We would like answers to the following questions:

1. What is the rationale for this decision?
2. How many individuals are currently in removal or other proceedings before the Cincinnati hearing location?
3. What is the average number of proceedings per year by hearing locations in comparable jurisdictions?

4. What steps were taken to consult with the community, members of Congress, and other affected parties about the decision to close the Cincinnati hearing location?
5. Was a more central location considered, such as Columbus, for a new hearing location?

We are concerned with the lack of notification and communication by the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to Members of Congress and the local community. We respectfully request a prompt response to our concerns and urge a reversal of the decision to close the Cincinnati hearing office.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Steve Driehaus  
Member of Congress