

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Vitiello, Lauren M
Sent: Tuesday, April 07, 2015 2:23 PM
To: #ZNK Asylum Officers; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers; #ZNK-Training Officers; #ZNK FDNS
Cc: Rauffer, Susan; Heinrich, Lorie R
Subject: A GREAT training on Monday! (Mandatory for AOs and SAOs)

Importance: High



THE ZNK TRAINING THEATRE PRESENTS

DR. ALLEN KELLER
BELLEVUE NYU PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE
ASSESSING TRAUMA IN THE CF CONTEXT AND VICARIOUS TRAUMATIZATION OF ASYLUM OFFICERS

MONDAY, April 13th, 2:00 to 3:30, 4th FLOOR TRAINING ROOM

Mandatory for AOs and SAOs

Lauren Vitiello

Training Officer | DHS | USCIS | Newark Asylum Office

1200 Wall St. West, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071 | ☎ [redacted] fax 201.531.1877 | ✉ [redacted]

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Shirk, Georgette L

From: Swen, Oluremi A (Remi)
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2016 7:38 AM
To: Raufer, Susan
Subject: Credibility Training - assessments and notes
Attachments:

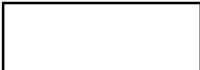



Hey Sue,

I totally forgot to send this yesterday. Here are some credibility referrals with varying degrees of accuracy. Some are completely off base, others just need a little fixing. Unfortunately, I do not have the notes for many of them because the officers are not in the office and their notes are not on the L Drive.

“Kindness Matters”

Best,
Remi

Oluremi A. Swen
Supervisory Asylum Officer/Training Coordinator
Boston Sub-Office/ Newark Asylum Office
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02203
Office:  (b)(6)
Cell:  (b)(6)

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

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Affirmative Asylum Interview Notes
Asylum Officer: Frank Lipiner – ZNK #181

Date of Interview: February 24, 2016

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Mandatory Bar Questions

Bar Questions for Principal Applicant

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Shirk, Georgette L

Subject: Effects of Trauma on Credibility Workshop- Presented by Rebecca Dempster
Location: NOMA Workspaces- 840 First Street, NE, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20002

Start: Tue 3/31/2015 7:30 AM
End: Wed 4/1/2015 4:00 PM

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Dhabalia, Dimple D

Just a reminder about the workshop this Tuesday and Wednesday. If you are not going to be able to make it, please let me know ASAP so I can give you slot to someone else. Thanks!

Regards,

Dimple

If you are receiving this invitation, you are confirmed to attend the credibility and trauma workshop being presented by Rebecca Dempster on March 31 and April 1. The workshop starts at 9am each morning, but we don't know what the check-in process will be like, so please plan to arrive early so the workshop can begin on time as there is a lot of information to cover in a very short period. This is really a wonderful opportunity for our directorate as Dr. Dempster's presentation is somewhat provocative and thought provoking, especially when we consider how we approach credibility in the interview process. There is a considerable amount of interest about this topic at the moment and you will be attending this workshop with UNHCR case workers, PRM, and individuals from other USG agencies. Please note that we have a very limited number of spots and a long waiting list of people who are interested in attending, so **if you will not be attending, please let me know ASAP so I can give your slot to someone on the waiting list.**

Below you will find a description of the workshop, the agenda and Rebecca Dempster's bio. Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide any additional information.

Regards,

Dimple

Workshop Description

This workshop highlights the gaps between scientific research on trauma, memory, and deception, and the approaches to interviewing and credibility taken within the asylum system. The workshop will build on this research to present empirically-informed practices for interviewing asylum seekers and making decisions about their credibility. Participants will be able to describe how the experience of fear impacts behaviour, cognition, and memory, and how these findings should influence their work with asylum seekers. The workshop also addresses secondary trauma in interviewers as an occupational hazard in working with asylum seekers. Participants will be able to identify signs of secondary trauma and strategies for preventing and managing this syndrome.

**Interviewing and Credibility Workshop
31 March & 1 April 2015**

Day 1	
9:00 to 9:30	Opening Remarks and Overview
9:30 to 10:30	Neurobiology of Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense Cascade • Symptom Trajectories
10:30 to 10:45	Refreshment Break
10:45 to 12:30	Neurobiology of Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal memory and normal forgetting • Memory for traumatic events
12:30 to 13:30	Lunch
13:30 to 15:00	Neurobiology of Trauma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for Interviewing
15:00 to 15:15	Refreshment Break
15:15 to 16:45	Secondary Trauma in Interviewers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs and risk factors • Individual strategies for preventing and managing ST • Organizational strategies for preventing and managing ST
16:45 to 17:00	Wrap-Up

Day 2	
9:00 to 9:15	Review and Questions from Day 1
9:15 to 10:30	Detecting Deception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors influencing judgments • Factors associated with deception
10:30 to 10:45	Refreshment Break
10:45 to 12:30	Improving Accuracy in Credibility Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering alternatives • Practice cases
12:30 to 13:30	Lunch
13:30 to 14:30	Dealing with Credibility Issues in Interviews
14:30 to 15:00	Role play preparation
15:00 to 15:15	Refreshment Break
15:15 to 16:45	Role play presentations
15:30 to 16:45	Wrap-Up

Biographical Background

Dr. Rebecca Dempster

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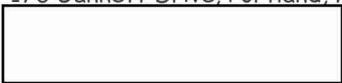
Shirk, Georgette L

From: Blauvelt, Sally
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2015 5:26 AM
To: Boyle, Meghann W; Raufer, Susan
Subject: FW: Asylum Seekers Working Group Meeting - Friday 10.2.15
Attachments: NOTES - Asylum Seekers Work Group_9.4.2015.docx; Agenda- Asylum Seekers Working Group - 10.3.15.docx


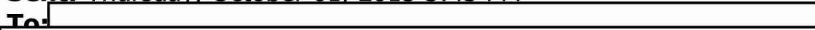
Hi Meghann, Sue,

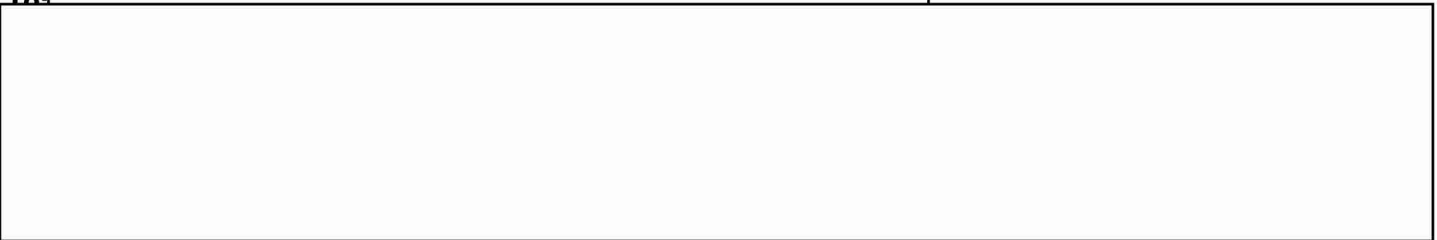
I know this is super late notice, but any updates either to the Boston sub-office, or nationally that I can share with these folks at today's 9:30am meeting?

Sally Blauvelt
Field Office Director, Maine
US Citizenship and Immigration Services
176 Gannett Drive, Portland, ME 04106



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From: Alysia Melnick [mailto:] (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2015 3:43 PM
To: 



Subject: RE: Asylum Seekers Working Group Meeting - Friday 10.2.15

Hello,

Please find attached the agenda and (again) the notes from last meeting.

Looking forward to our continued discussion tomorrow at 9:30 here at UWGP.

Thanks!

Alysia

Alysia Melnick | Director of Public Policy
United Way of Greater Portland | P.O. Box 15200, Portland, ME 04112-5200
P 207-874-1000 x [redacted] Cell [redacted] | amelnick@unitedwaygp.org
www.unitedwaygp.org

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From: Alysia Melnick
Sent: Tuesday, September 29, 2015 4:57 PM (b)(6)
To: 'Sally Sutton'; [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] Dawn Stiles; David MacLean; Krista Morris; Linda Momborquette; Regina Phillips; [redacted] Dan Coyne; Jeri Chapman; [redacted] (b)(6)
Subject: Asylum Seekers Working Group Meeting - Friday 10.2.15

Hello all,

This is a reminder of our meeting, this Friday morning, October 2nd. **Thanks again to Sally Sutton for hosting and notetaking last month.** There continue to be a lot of changes and new information related to asylum seekers, so I appreciate this gathering and conversation. **Please send agenda items my way!**

The Asylum Seekers Working Group –

Date: Friday 10.2.15
Time: 9:30 – 11am
Where: UWGP, One Canal Plaza, Portland

Two upbeat recent pieces to share:

- This one, profiling Maxwell Chikuta, who has worked with and volunteered with United Way as a Public Policy Committee member, an investment team member, and a Loaned Executive.
- And this one, about Youth and Family Outreach, a UWGP partner agency, a wonderful organization ([redacted] (b)(6) [redacted] ☺). (b)(6)

Hope to see many of you Friday,

Alysia

Alysia Melnick | Director of Public Policy
United Way of Greater Portland | P.O. Box 15200, Portland, ME 04112-5200
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www.unitedwaygp.org

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Asylum Seekers Work Group Meeting
September 4, 2015

Members Present: Philip Mantis, Eliza Mette, Anna Welch, Gail Kezer, Leslie Merrill, Allen Ewing-Merrill, Catherine Yomoali, Dave MacLean, Sally Sutton

1. Current Status of PL 324 (LD 369) & Status of City of Portland's approach/Fund to support asylum seekers and movement to align eligibility:

- There was a meeting last week with good news – the people's veto won't go through (and Asylum seekers are still eligible for GA. At a subsequent meeting (with Mayor Brennan), City indicated that it would cover all costs (including food, medicine, utilities, etc.) for people currently on GA (City could previously only provide funds for housing purposes).
- Portland Community Support Funds: previously, legal status didn't matter for GA purposes. With the passage of LD 369, only people who are lawfully present or who are seeking lawful status change are eligible. State's intent is to include people going through the process, but the potential of the "GA cliff" exists for people falling between the 1st 6 months after arrival (within their I94) and after receipt of asylum application. Retroactivity of LD 369 will allow Portland to cover all categories of assistance (rather than just rent) and begin covering new people as of October 15.
- People are having trouble finding housing despite having housing vouchers: family shelter is at capacity and 19 other families are at over flow facilities. Portland is attempting to enforce a state statute that requires municipalities to place immigrants rather than turn them away. The immigrant communities in Maine have been reached out to and have really stepped up to help place newly arrived families. The standard for health and safety was apparently interpreted to not include being homeless between April and October, and thus a family would not qualify for emergency GA if they found themselves in that situation.

2. Update on Federal backlog/Boston GA Office:

- Still processing 2013 cases; expects to reach early 2014 cases by fall of 2016 (so a little ahead of schedule). Will be closed until October for renovations.

3. Update on lack of compliance by Federal Government with processing deadlines:

- No updates

4. Update on unaccompanied minors' group facilitated by Maine Law

- Issue: kids under 18 (in Maine) who were abandoned, neglected or abused by at least one parent have the option of going to state court; presents a great and more expedited pathway to get a green card
- Anna Welch met with other key stakeholders to discuss what services are currently provided, what the challenges are and where the gaps fall. They also brainstormed current available of resources and how to allocate them.
- Goals: resource guide for counselors; create task force; reach out to schools

5. Office of Refugee Resettlement to Maine:

- Was here on Wednesday – state analysts are being redistributed regionally. Representatives will return next year to monitor and evaluate, and work with refugees and people who work with refugees.

6. Other:

- Legislation introduced by Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard: The Professional's Access to Health (Path) Workforce Integration Act (H.R. 2709)
- Legislation introduced by Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (in conjunction with Senator King) in order to eliminate work time for authorization.

Asylum Seekers Working Group Agenda

October 2, 2015, 9:30-11:00

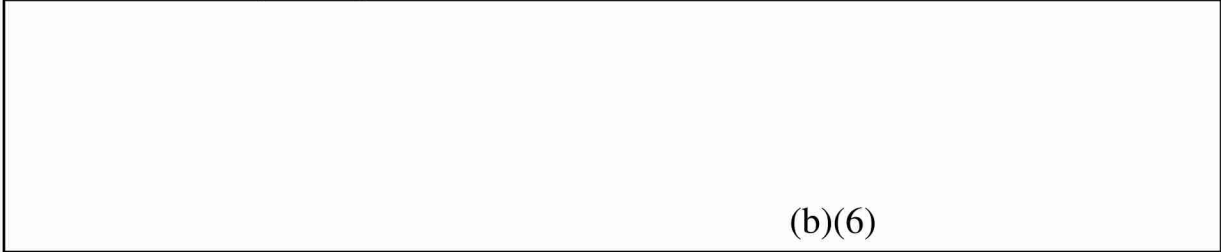
United Way of Greater Portland, Baxter Conference Room

Items for discussion:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Welcome and introductions | 9:30 – 9:35 |
| 2. Current status of PL 324 (LD 369) | 9:35 – 10:00 |
| a. Including an update on City of Portland’s movement to align eligibility | |
| b. Has the City worked out the kinks in terms of administering the program? | |
| c. How are things going in other municipalities? | |
| d. Family shelter – update? | |
| 3. Update on the Portland “welcoming initiative” | 10:00 – 10:10 |
| 4. Anticipated Referendum question | 10:10 – 10:20 |
| 5. Update on federal backlog/Boston GA office | 10:20 – 10:25 |
| 6. Update on lawsuit re: lack of compliance by Fed Gov processing deadlines | 10:25 – 10:30 |
| 7. Update on unaccompanied minors’ group facilitated by Maine Law | 10:30 – 10:40 |
| 8. Changes on federal level? | 10:40 – 10:45 |
| 9. Upcoming events, meetings, conferences? | 10:45 – 10:50 |
| 10. Discuss proposal by United Way to solicit feedback from this group for their
Community Goal Setting process | 10:50 – 10:55 |
| 11. Closing thoughts, next steps, agenda items for next meeting? | 10:55 – 11:00 |

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2016 9:06 AM
To: Swen, Oluremi A (Remi)
Subject: FW: Boston Credibility training 103
Attachments:

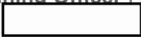


From: Young, Noel L
Sent: Monday, October 03, 2016 4:44 PM
To: Raufer, Susan
Cc: Vitiello, Lauren M
Subject: RE: Boston Credibility training 103

Hi Sue,

I have attached some credibility referrals that I reviewed for new AOs that I found lacking. I have provided versions with the comments I sent back. I also attached their notes. I was also able to find a couple assessments in the L Drive from AOs I know struggled with credibility analyses. Unfortunately, these do not have notes. I hope this is helpful.

You want to do Credibility 103 here at ZNK, too??

Noël Young
Training Officer | Newark Asylum Office
☎  (b)(6)

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Monday, October 03, 2016 10:12 AM
To: Vitiello, Lauren M; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi); Boyle, Meghann W; Heinrich, Lorie R; Varghese, Sunil R; Young, Noel L
Subject: RE: Boston Credibility training 103

Thanks. You are right. I really was sort of thinking that I would have the interview notes. All the more reason to identify such cases as you are reviewing the file so that the notes can be captured. I don't want to hold production up, so if you get such a case and bring it to my attention, maybe I could get someone to make the copies of the documents I need.

From: Vitiello, Lauren M
Sent: Monday, October 03, 2016 9:56 AM
To: Raufer, Susan; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi); Boyle, Meghann W; Heinrich, Lorie R; Varghese, Sunil R; Young, Noel L
Subject: RE: Boston Credibility training 103

It may be good to work with the notes too. Sadly, most officers don't save notes in the L drive, but of course we could request them. I started looking at assessments in the L drive for you and it occurred to me that in many instances the

credibility paragraphs that address the issue of lacking detail would really work better in a training if the AOs had the relevant parts of the notes, too, eliciting testimony to probe credibility being a huge element in this kind of training.

Lauren Vitiello

Training Officer | DHS | USCIS | Newark Asylum Office

1200 Wall St. West, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071 | ☎ [REDACTED]

/ fax 201.531.1877 | ✉ [REDACTED]

“Kindness Matters”

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From: Raufer, Susan

Sent: Friday, September 30, 2016 3:06 PM

To: #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi); Boyle, Meghann W; Heinrich, Lorie R; Varghese, Sunil R; Young, Noel L; Vitiello, Lauren M

Subject: Boston Credibility training 103

All,

In mid-October I am going to Boston for an AILA meeting (Oct 19 – 21). While I am there I promised Meghann that I would do a training for her AOs. We decided that I should do a training on Credibility. Since I do sort of a “Credibility 101” at RAIO training, we thought it would be a good idea to try to take it to the next level – addressing the fact that in applying the five-step methodology spelled out in the lesson plans (Identify/Determine relevance/Explain concern to applicant/Ask for explanation/Analyze) many AOs get in trouble by skipping some of the steps.

For example, an AO might identify the credibility concern, think through a possible explanation (employing parallel universe thinking, for example) then NOT go through the steps of actually engaging the applicant in the process, and write up a conclusion that the SAO will not want to sign off on because the applicant was not confronted, and the officer is speculating. I am calling this Credibility 103, because Jean Koh Peters did a Credibility 102 in our offices last year, that was a little bit different.

I think the best way to get this point across is to come up with examples of assessments where the credibility analysis has failed, and work through with the AOs why it failed. So this is where you come in... Could you please forward to me any examples of failed credibility analyses that you come across? I will be happy to redact them and creatively edit the facts so they are not easily recognizable. I just don’t want to come up with the examples from scratch.

Thanks!

Sue

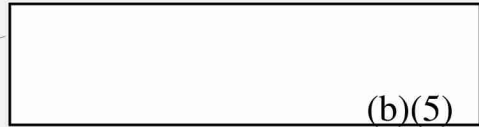
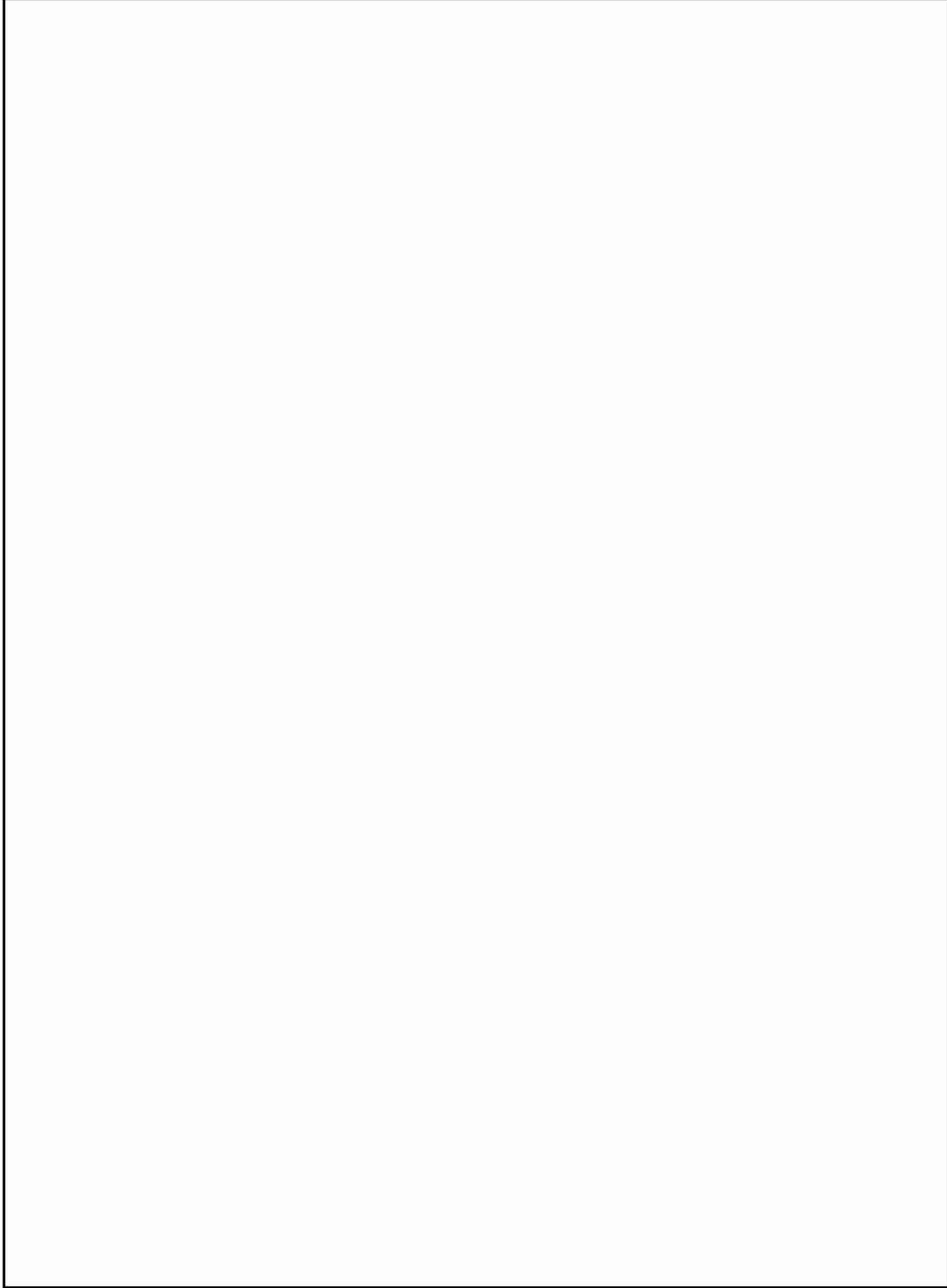
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ALIEN NUMBER:

[Redacted]

DATE: August 31, 2016

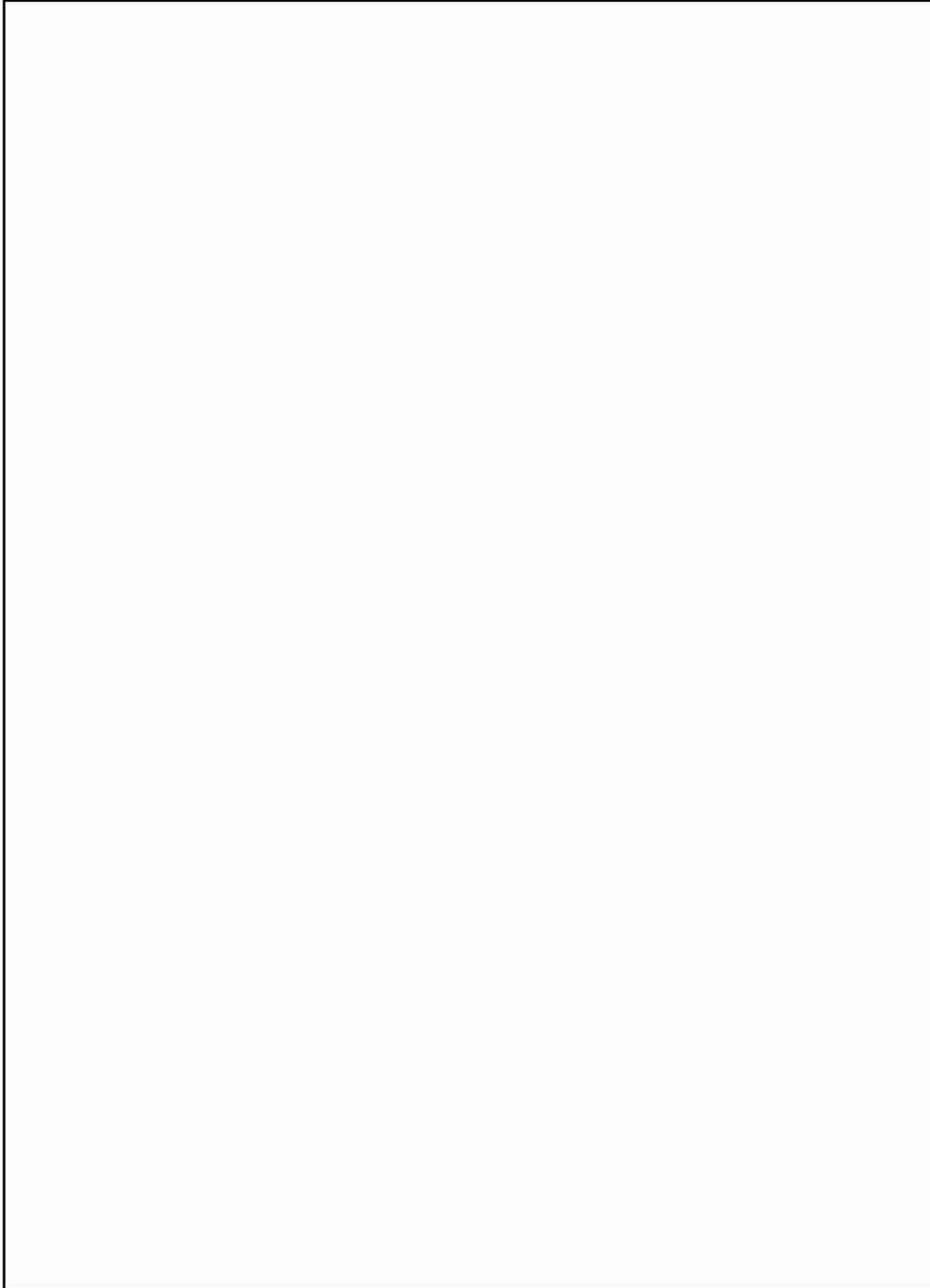
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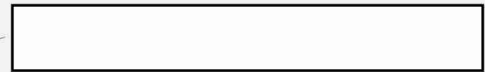
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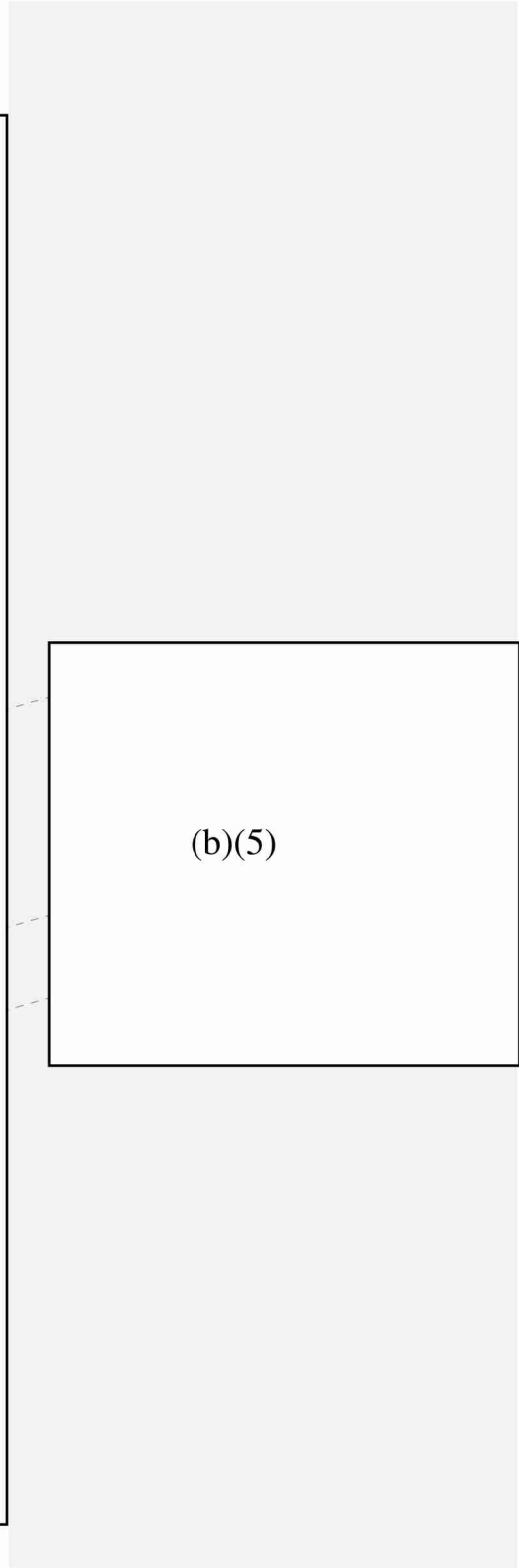
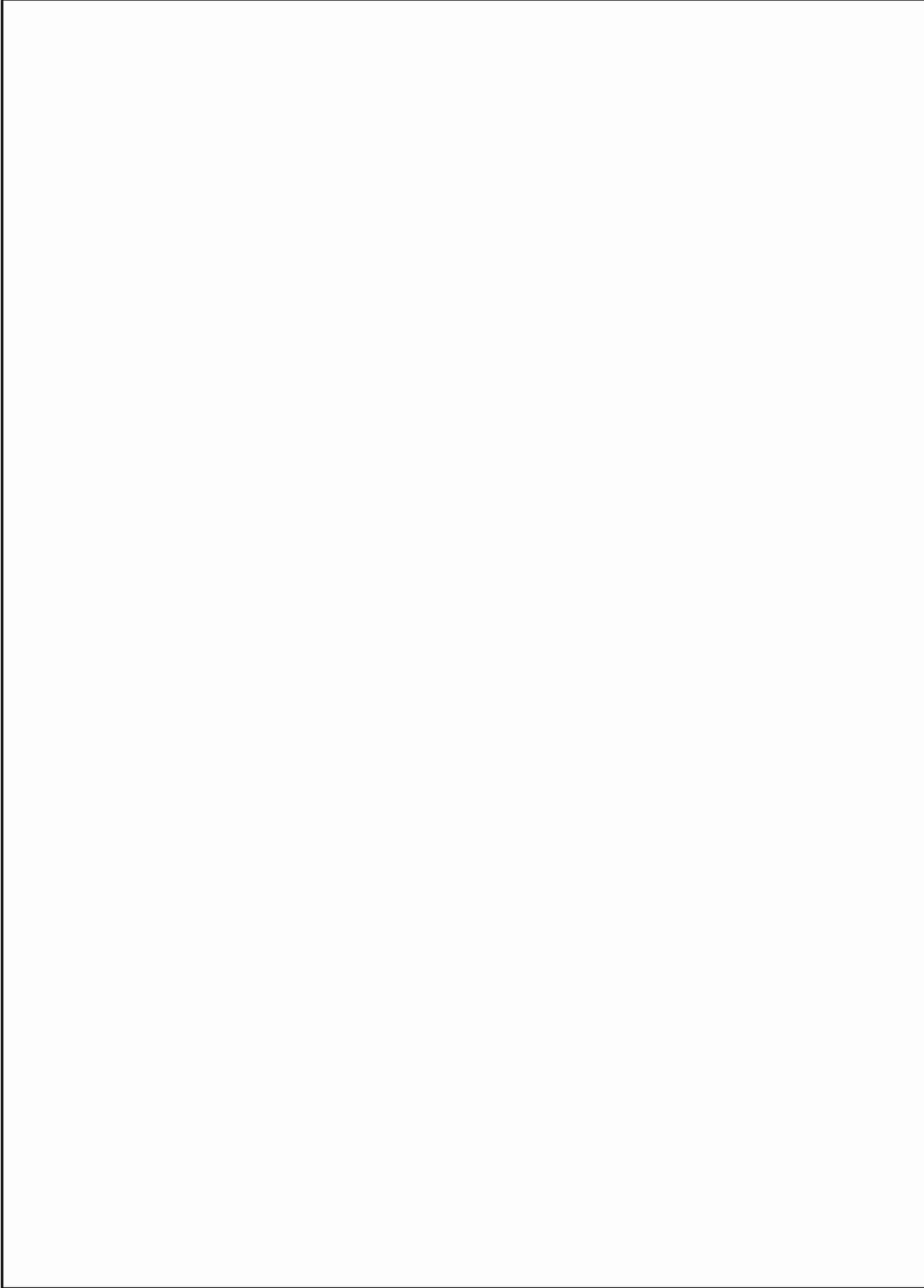
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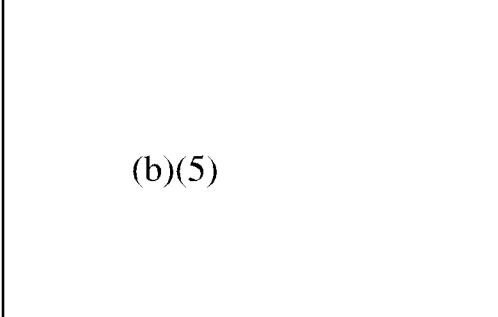
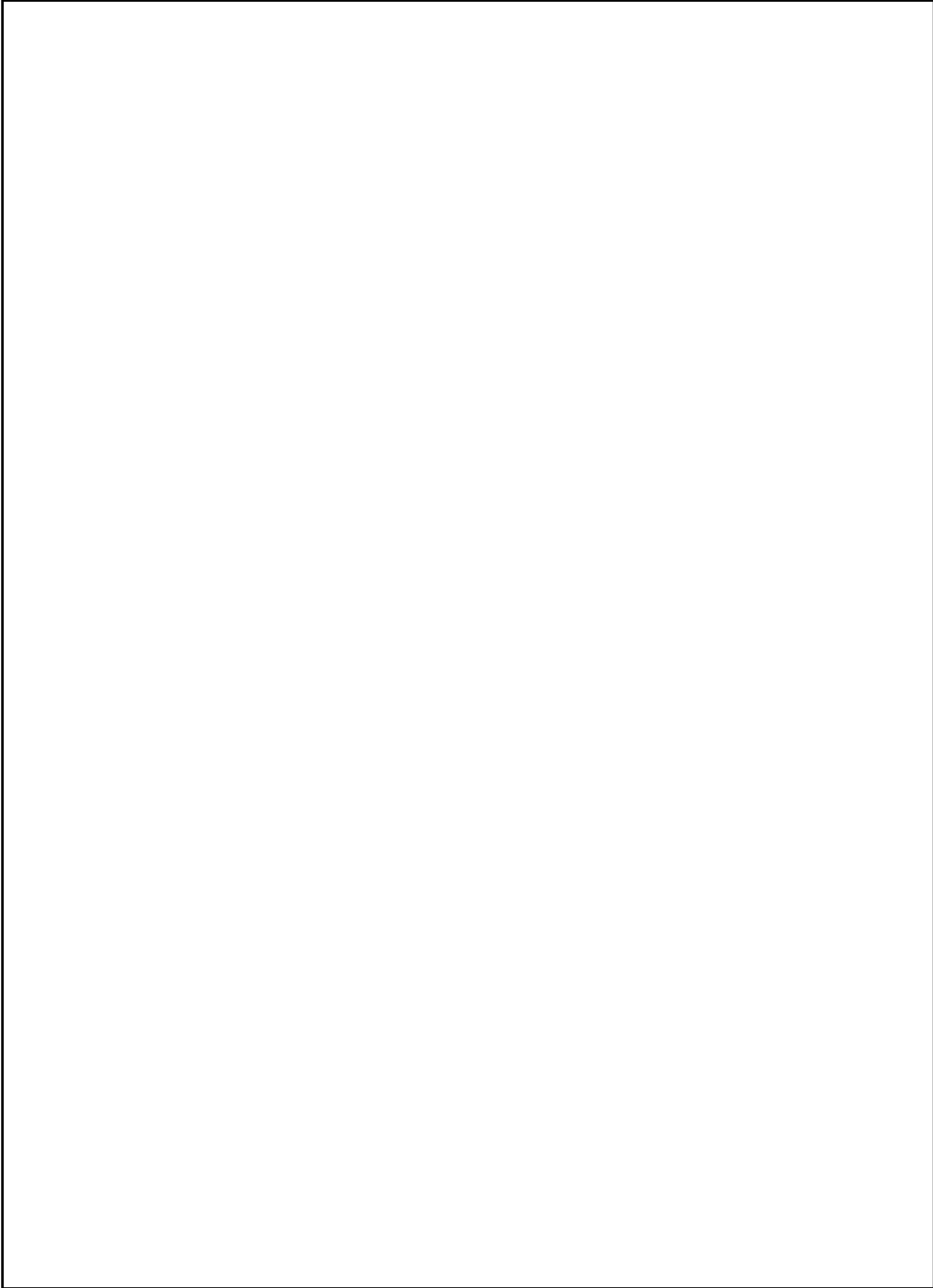


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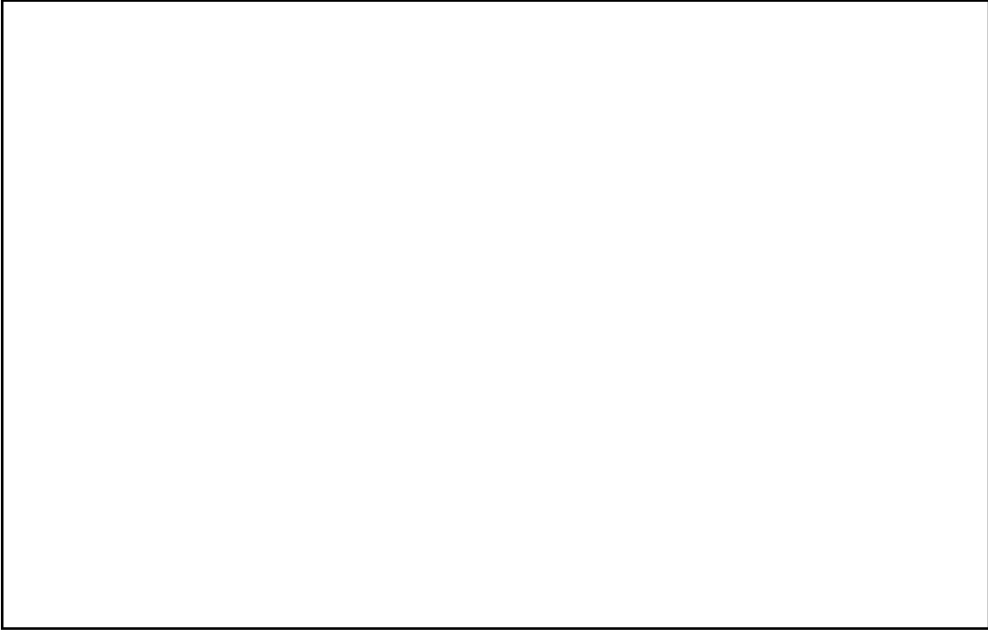


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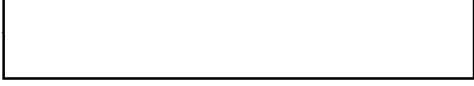
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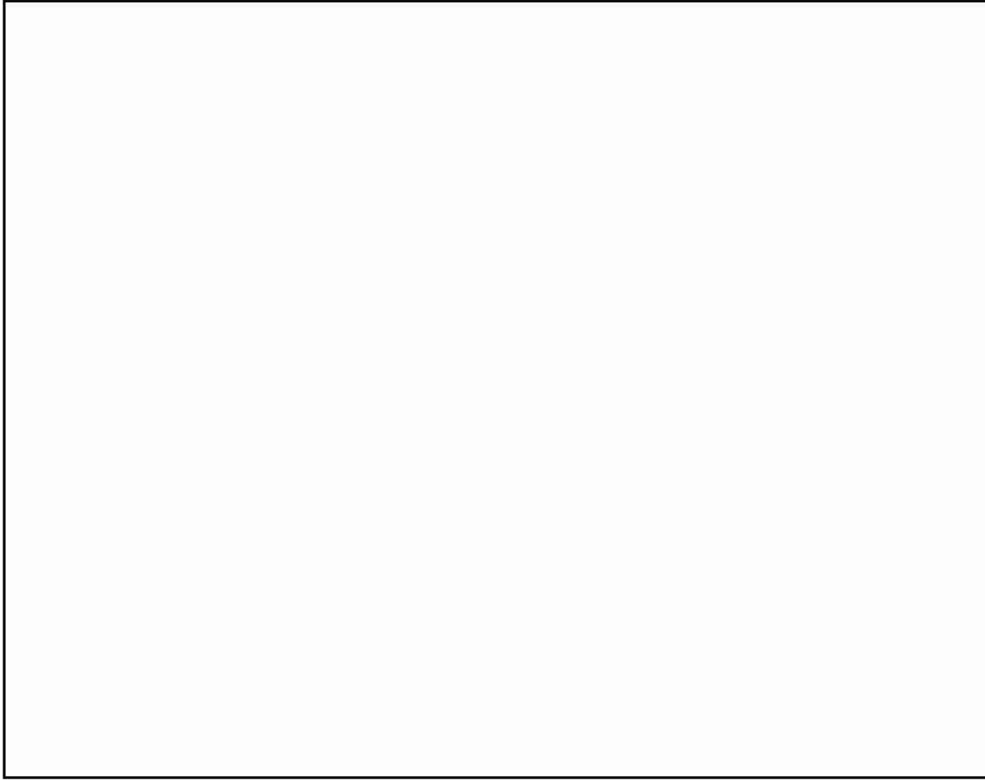


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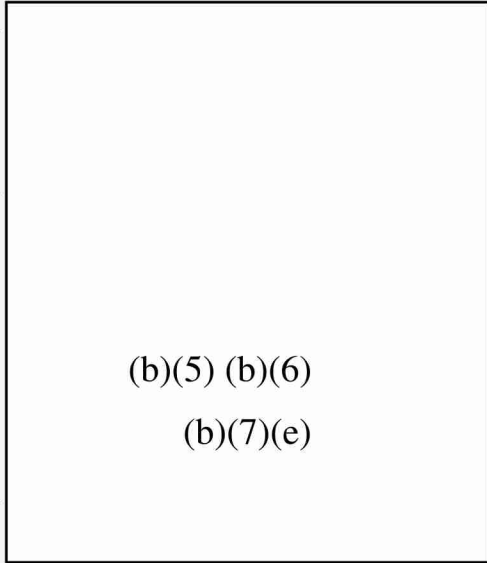
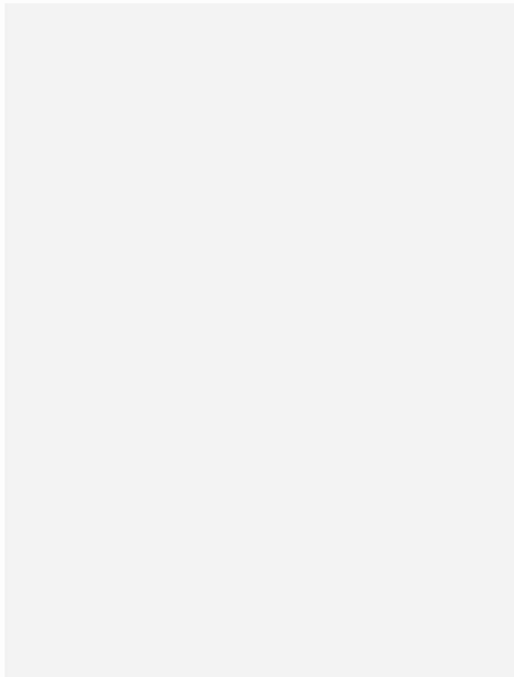
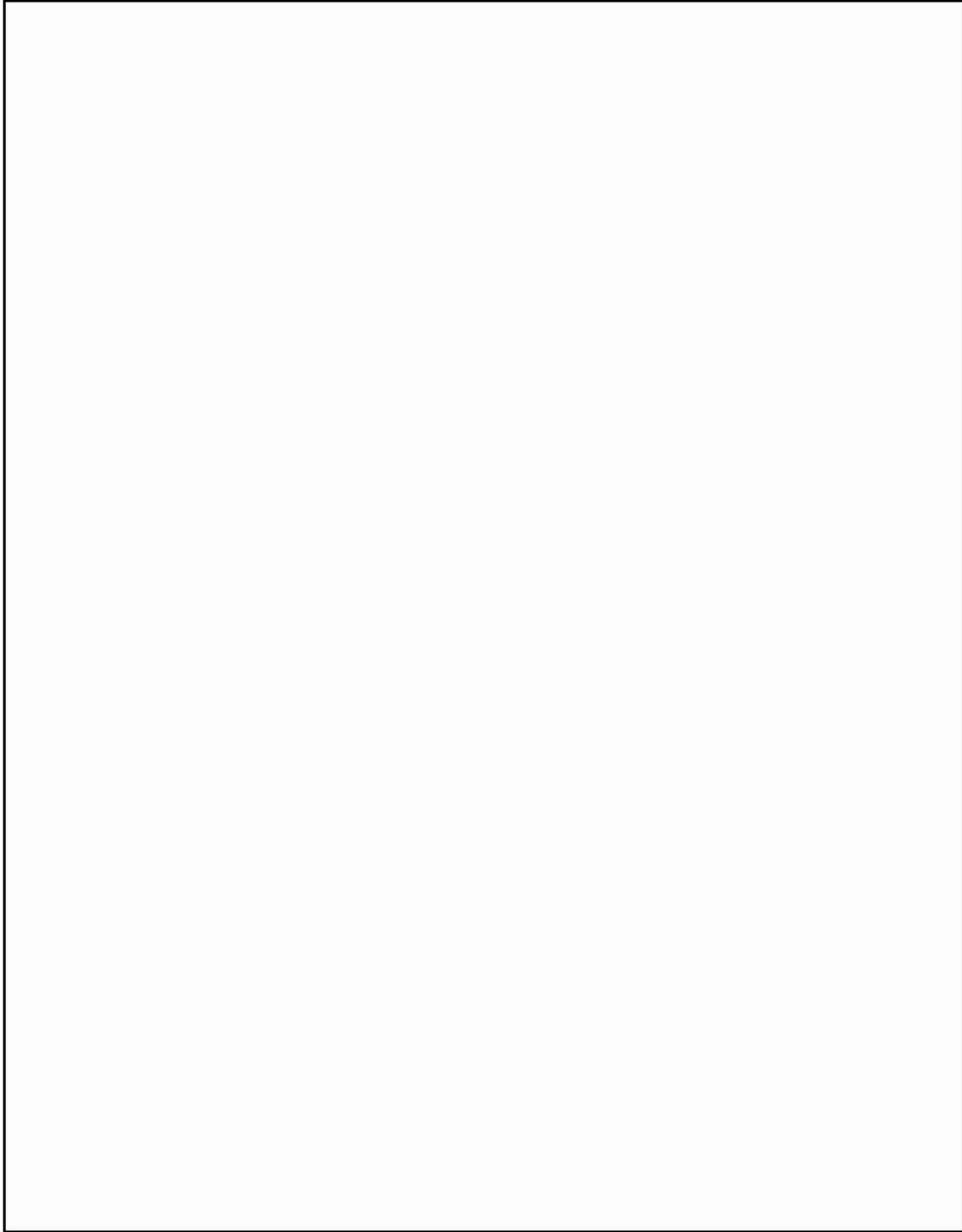
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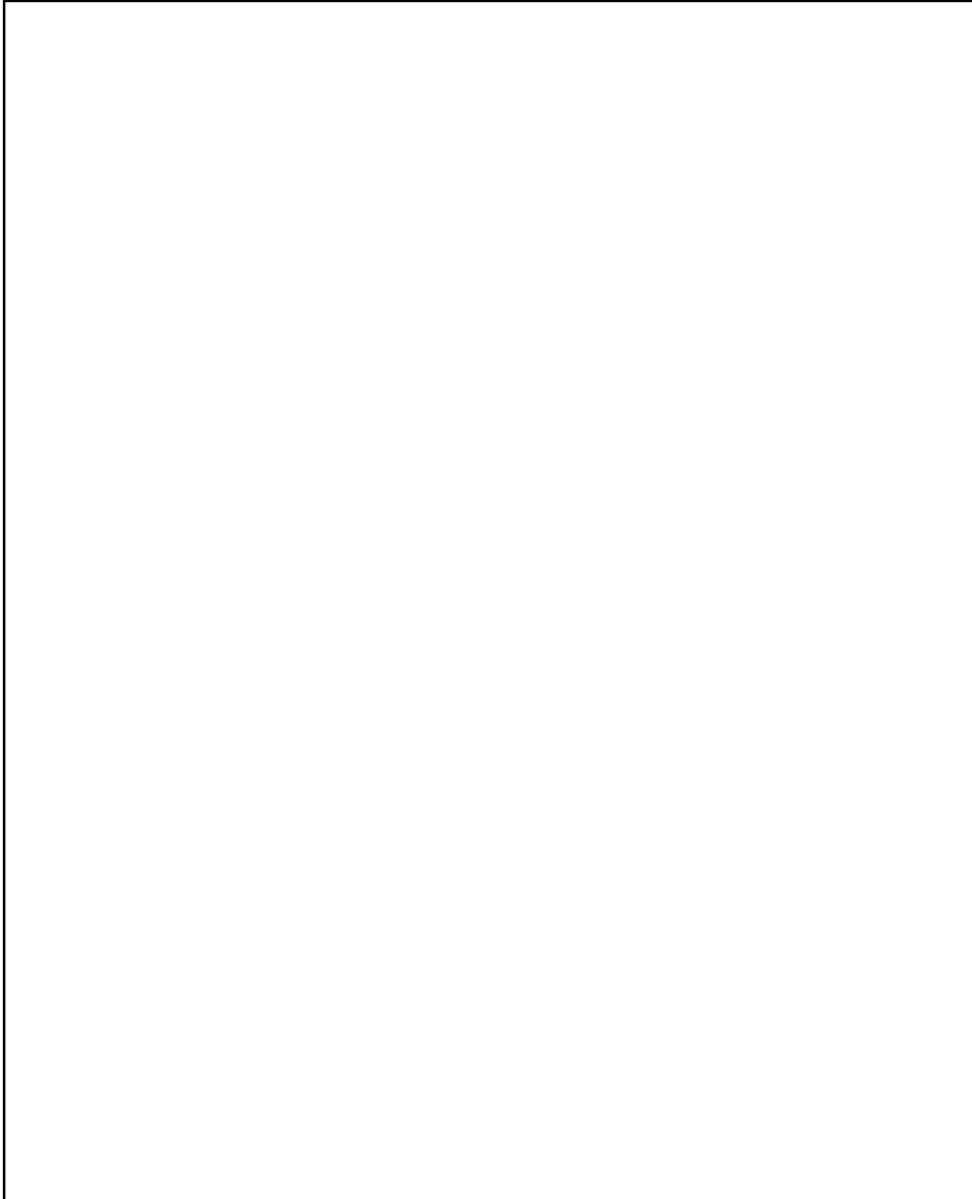
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Commented [NLY7]: Redundant with edits in prior sentence

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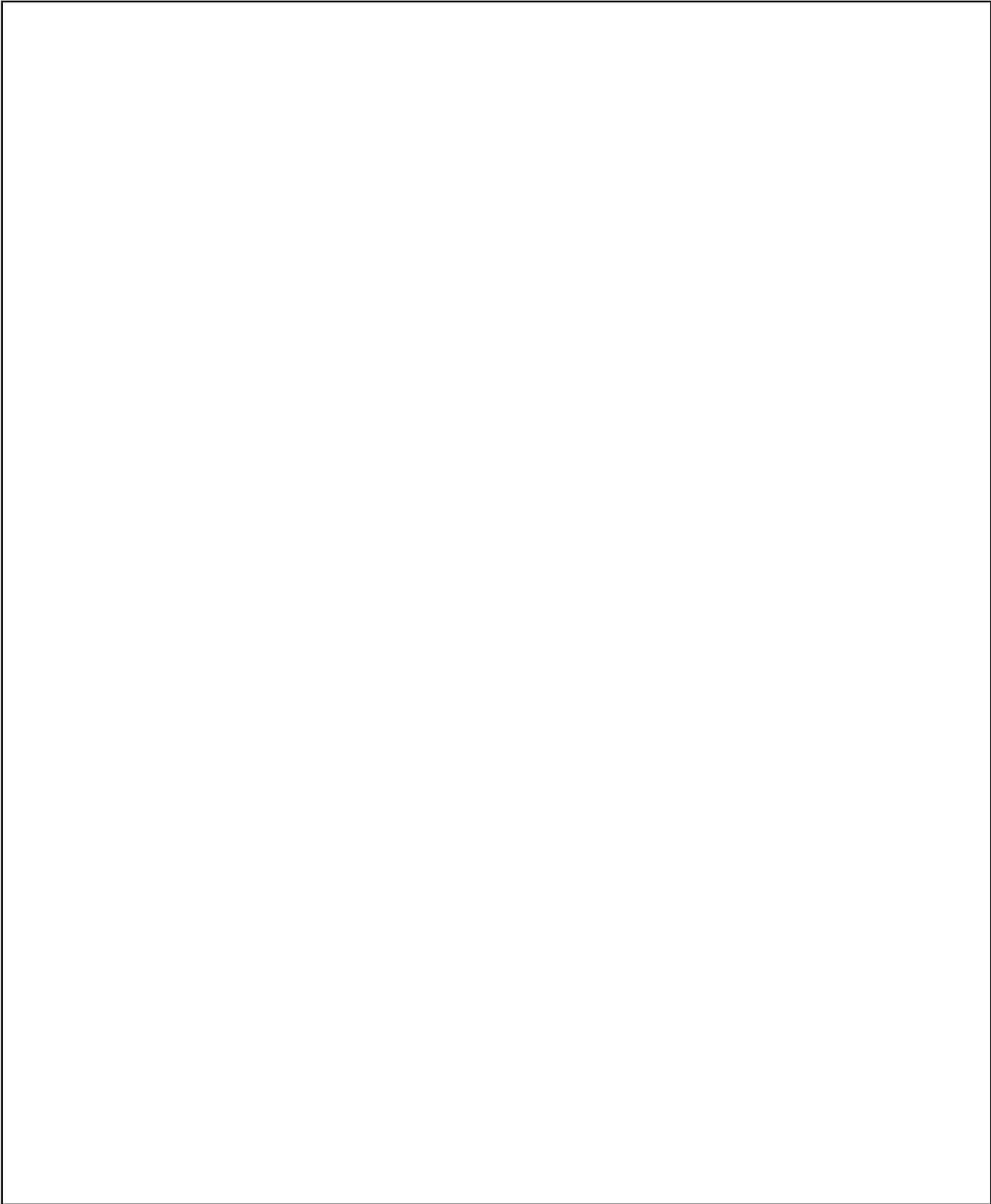
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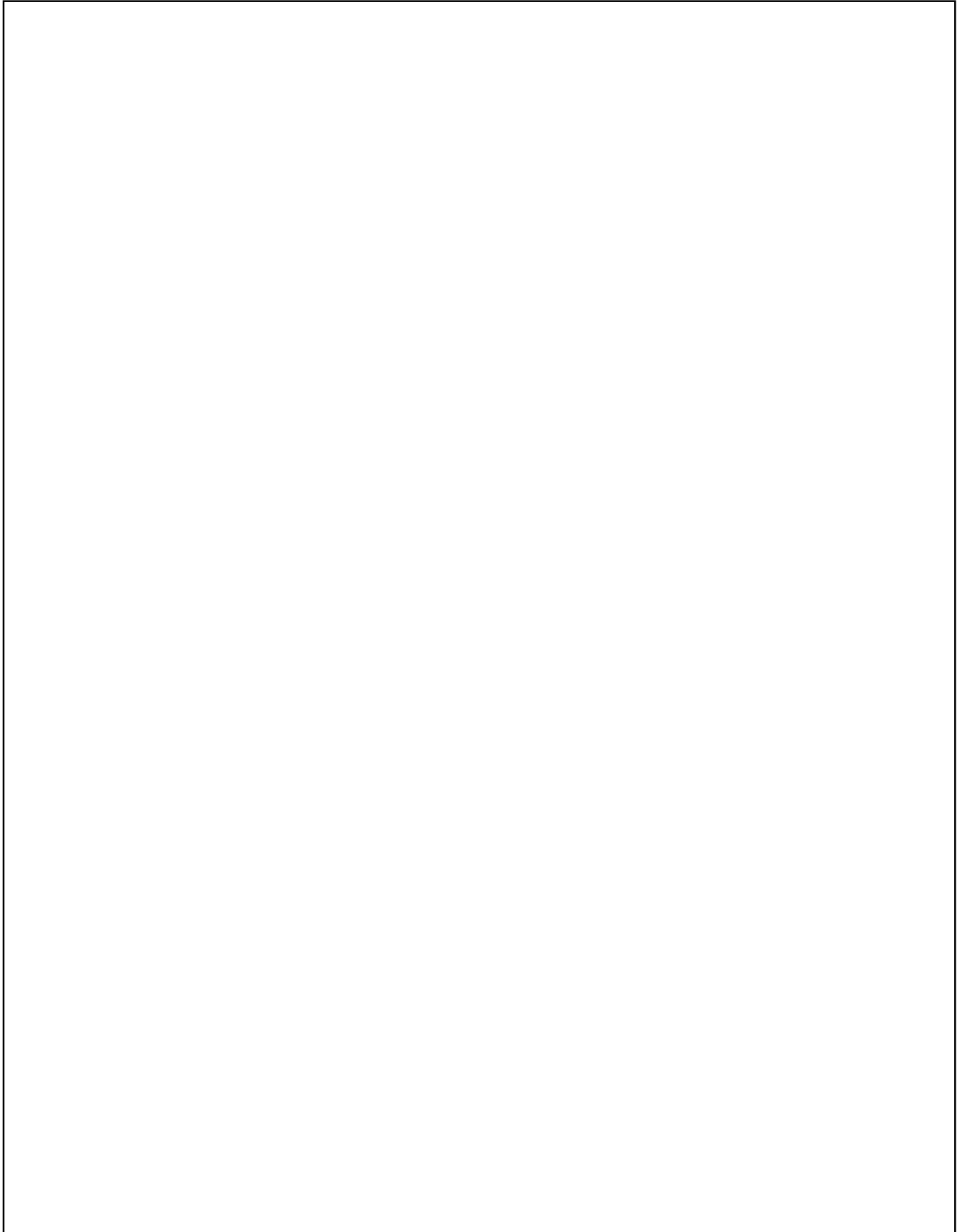
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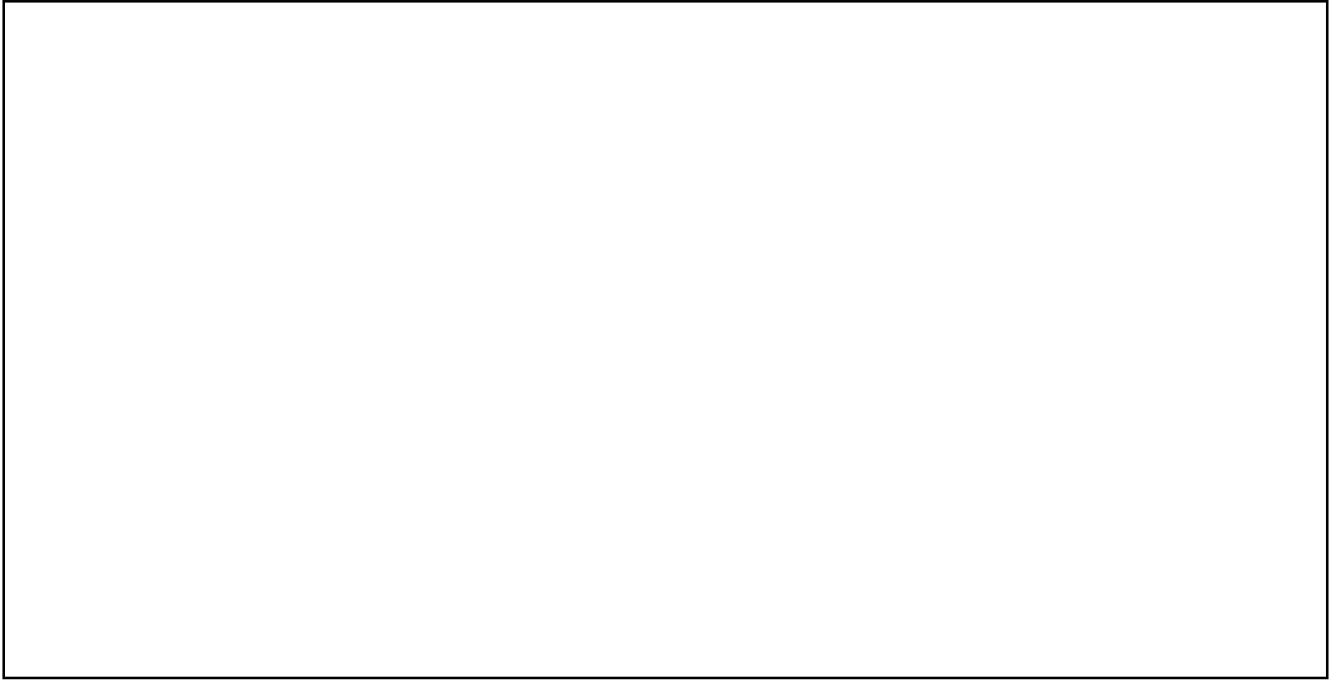
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INTERVIEW NOTES

Applicant's Name:

A#: (b)(6)

Derivative's Name and A#:

Interview Date: August 30, 2016

Asylum Officer: U. IKORO

AO's ID: ZNK 097

(b)(6)

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A#:

Applicant Name:

Country:

AO: Anna Gamza ZNK250

Date: 06/08/2016

Page 1 of 23

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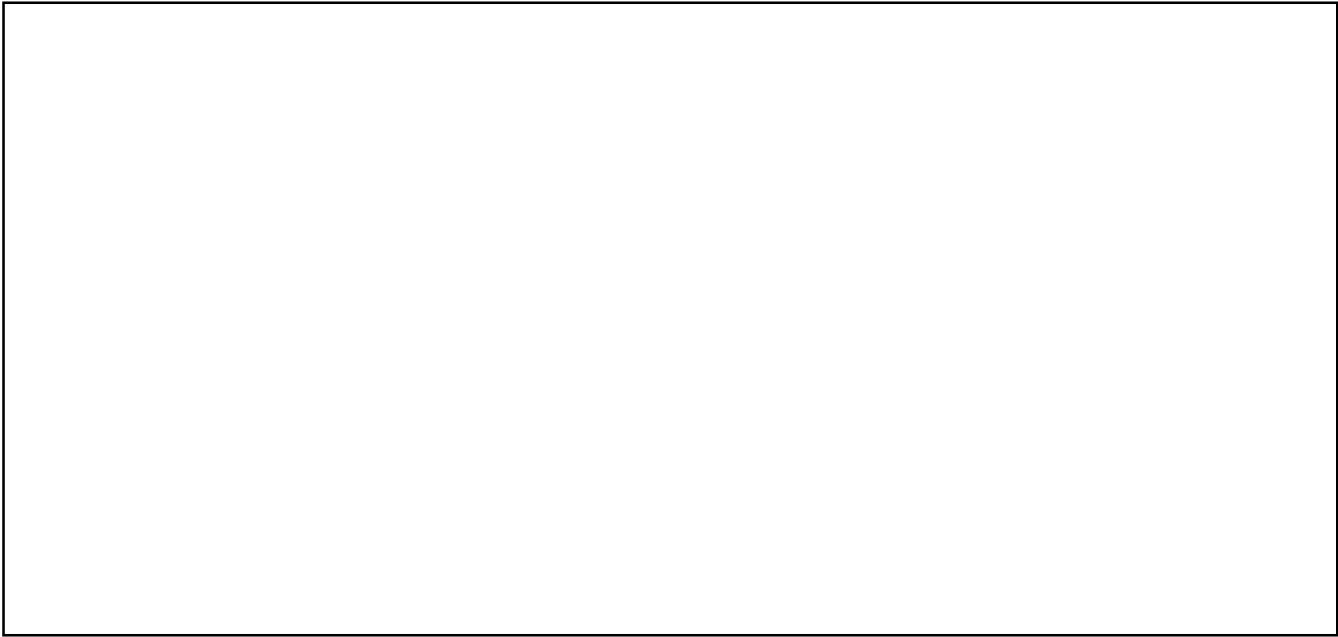
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Name

AO: ZNK243/HAGEN

Date: 04/13/2016

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INTERVIEW START TIME: 9:27 AM

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Officer Name:

Applicant Name:

A #

Date: 08/30/ 2016

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Officer Name: [redacted]
Applicant Name: [redacted] (b)(6)
A # [redacted]
Date: 08/30/ 2016

Interview end time	9:41
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Shirk, Georgette L

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2016 11:17 AM
To: Kim, Ted H; Lafferty, John L
Cc: Boyle, Meghann W; Varghese, Sunil R
Subject: FW: City of Portland

Ted and John,

I am interested in knowing your take on this. As you know, we get a lot of press out of Portland, Maine because of their policy of providing local benefits to asylum seekers. I have actually been at an NGO meeting in Portland, where the most vocal opposition to our backlog came from the local government representative. Sally Blauvelt, the FOD in Portland, is interested in us providing a presentation to the local city council. I have no doubt that Meghann could make such a presentation. The question is, do we want to?

Sue

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2016 12:11 PM
To: Blauvelt, Sally
Cc: Boyle, Meghann W; Varghese, Sunil R
Subject: RE: City of Portland

Hmmm. This is an interesting one. As you can see, I am looping in Meghann Boyle, since it would likely fall to her to be the SME for such a presentation. I also think we would have to run it by HQ, and at the very least, if we went, we would go with our PR "handlers" since it is a PR event. Let me get back to you on this one...

Sue

From: Blauvelt, Sally
Sent: Friday, February 19, 2016 12:01 PM
To: Raufer, Susan
Subject: City of Portland

Hi Sue, I met with the City Manager of Portland this morning to talk about the asylum process, etc... And he asked if I would be able to be present as a subject matter expert before the city council as they discuss city services for this population. Obviously, I'm not the person for that. You are! Is this something that you would be willing to do. Media would be present?

Sally Blauvelt
Field Office Director, Maine
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

(b)(6)

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2014 3:20 PM
To: Carr, Estela; Nunes, Gorette C; Sullivan, Kim
Cc: Heinrich, Lorie R; Pope, Theresa L; Allen, Leticia; Dragan, Mariusz; Miller, Scott H
Subject: FW: Maine circuit ride--scheduling questions
Attachments: [redacted].G-28.pdf; [redacted].G-28.pdf; [redacted].G-28.pdf

(b)(6)

Gorette and Kim,

[redacted]

(b)(6)

Sue

From: Jamie Wagner [mailto:[redacted]] (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2014 3:03 PM
To: Carr, Estela
Cc: Raufer, Susan; TJ Mills; Margaret Moran
Subject: Re: Maine circuit ride--scheduling questions

Greetings.

(b)(6)

[redacted]

I appreciate your assistance.

Kind regards,

James Wagner

On Mon, Mar 3, 2014 at 4:15 PM, Carr, Estela <[redacted]> wrote:

Good afternoon Mr. Wagner,

(b)(6)

According to our records you are the attorney of record for the first two applicants' and they have been scheduled for March 18 and March 19. Unfortunately, at this time I am unable to provide you with information regarding the other applicants because no G-28 has been filed.

Please forward your G-28 via mail or by fax (201-531-1877) at your earliest convenience for the rest of the applicants so that we can update our files.

Thank you,

Estela Carr

Asylum Officer

USCIS- Newark Asylum Office

1200 Wall Street West, 4th Fl.

Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

201-508-6100, Ext. [redacted] (b)(6)

201-531-1877, Fax

--

Law Office of James R. Wagner
343 Ocean House Road
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107
207-400-6038 (phone)
207-221-1127 (fax)



**Notice of Entry of Appearance
as Attorney or Accredited Representative
Department of Homeland Security**

**DHS
Form G-28**
OMB No. 1615-0105
Expires 02/29/2016

(b)(6)

(b)(6)



**Notice of Entry of Appearance
as Attorney or Accredited Representative
Department of Homeland Security**

**DHS
Form G-28**
OMB No. 1615-0105
Expires 02/29/2016

(b)(6)

(b)(6)



**Notice of Entry of Appearance
as Attorney or Accredited Representative
Department of Homeland Security**

**DHS
Form G-28**
OMB No. 1615-0105
Expires 02/29/2016

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Kumar, Vikram
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 10:13 AM
To: #ZNK Asylum Officers
Subject: FW: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi) - TRIG

Hi all,

See below for an FAQ regarding the TRIG implications of attending protests.

(b)(7)(e)

Vikram Kumar
Senior Asylum Officer
U.S. Department of Homeland Security- Newark Asylum Office

From: Mathew, Ajai [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 11:09 AM (b)(6)
To: Knowlton, Nicholas D [redacted]; Berman-vaporis, Rachel P [redacted]
[redacted]; Sullivan, Laura C [redacted]; Cleary, Heather M [redacted]
[redacted]; McMillan, Jill [redacted]; Clark, Dusty L [redacted]
[redacted]; McEvoy, Erin B [redacted]; Beck, LaToya S [redacted]
[redacted]; Trinh, Kimberly B [redacted]; Lynn, Mallory L [redacted]
[redacted]; Kim, Alejandra [redacted]; Dominguez, Maria R [redacted]
[redacted]; Talamantes, Eudelia A [redacted]; Coto, Yolanda R [redacted]
[redacted]; Bai, Ewa [redacted]; Dragan, Mariusz [redacted]
Fouda, Lauren T [redacted]; Kumar, Vikram [redacted]; Lewis, Victoria E [redacted]
[redacted]; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi) [redacted]; Sundborg, Rachael S [redacted]
[redacted]; Krause, Paige M [redacted]; Vasquez, Arnaldo A [redacted]
[redacted]; Romano Ferreira, Nicole I [redacted]; Damron, Andrew T [redacted]
[redacted]; Totter, Stephen [redacted]; Satia, Kimberly I [redacted]
[redacted]; Lehman, Danielle E [redacted]
Cc: Whalen, Ellen A [redacted]; Metzger, Evelyn S [redacted]; Picciotto, Giacomo A [redacted]; Kirkland, Brooke A [redacted]
Subject: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi) (b)(6)

Hi TRIG POCs,

Just sending this email to notify you of a new FAQ on Attending Demonstrations, which posted to the TRIG ECN yesterday and discusses whether there are any TRIG implications relating to attending demonstration, shouting slogans at a demonstration, attending demonstrations organized by Tier III groups, attending demonstrations that turn violent, and providing support to demonstrators at a violent demonstration.

[RAIO TRIG FAQ on Attending Demonstrations](#)

(b)(7)(e)

Movement for Solidarity and Democracy

Thank you,
Ajai

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Sundborg, Rachael S
Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2018 6:37 AM
To: #ZNK Asylum Officers
Cc: #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers
Subject: FW: NEW! NDAA of 2019: Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army exclusion

Good morning!

Please see below regarding the timeline for when the Rwandan Patriotic Front and Rwandan Patriotic Army meet the definition of a terrorist organization.

Please let any of your TRIG POCs ([redacted] at ZNK; [redacted] at ZBO) know if you have any questions.

(b)(7)(c)

Thank you,

Rachael

From: Whalen, Ellen A
Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2018 6:52 AM
To: Alvertos, Darice I; Baj, Ewa; Beck, LaToya S; Clark, Dusty L; Damron, Andrew T; Dominguez, Maria R; Dragan, Mariusz; Fouda, Lauren T; Kim, Alejandra; Kirkland, Brooke A; Knowlton, Nicholas D; Koelsch, David C; Kumar, Vikram; Lehman, Danielle E; Lynn, Mallory L; Mathew, Ajai; McEvoy, Erin B; McMillan, Jill; Metzger, Evelyn S; Onisko, Merrilyn A; Picciotto, Giacomo A; Romano Ferreira, Nicole I; Satia, Kimberly I; Schoser, Joseph R; Schupp-Star, Rachael M; Sullivan, Laura C; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi); Totter, Stephen; Trinh, Kimberly B; Vasquez, Arnoldo A; Whalen, Ellen A
Cc: Henson, Courtney A
Subject: FW: NEW! NDAA of 2019: Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army exclusion

Greetings Asylum TRIG POCs,

Please note the message below regarding the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. It creates a timeline for the Rwandan Patriotic Front and Rwandan Patriotic Army. They do not meet the definition of a terrorist organization under the Act for any period before August 1, 1994.

Note exception in section (2), which allows the Secretaries, in consultation with each other, to suspend application of the above and find the group to be a Tier III terrorist organization pre-August 1, 1994.

Please message to your offices as appropriate.

Ellen

From: Sohrakoff, Karen A
Sent: Tuesday, August 21, 2018 1:27 PM
To: Anderson, Kathryn E; Busenkell, Kathleen R (Katie); Chiorazzi, Anne; Cho, Jeannette S; Croizat, Jessika S; Dougherty, Linda M; Greeley, Kevin A; Greene, Salina F; Hicks, Celia F; Howard, Frank E; Katz, Jonathan E; Kirkland, Brooke A; Leigh, Jessica K; Mathew, Ajai; Metzger, Evelyn S; Micker, Jennifer N; Perry-Elby, Diana D; Prelogar, Brandon B; Schwartz, Claudia R; Sohrakoff, Karen A; Tarr, David S; Tomlyanovich, William J (Bill); Whalen, Ellen A; Whitney, Ronald

W; Wilson, Jennifer S; Zengotitabengoa, Colleen R; Zill, Katherine F
Subject: NEW! NDAA of 2019: Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army exclusion

TRIG WG Colleagues,

Last week, the 2019 NDAA was passed into law. It contains a section that creates a statutory exclusion from the provisions of 212(a)(3)(B) for 1) the Rwandan Patriotic Front/Rwandan Patriotic Army from the Tier III definition for any period before August 1, 1994 and 2) any activity undertaken by the alien in association with the Rwandan Patriotic Front or the Rwandan Patriotic Army before August 1, 1994. We will be participating in interagency communication to ensure that DOS, DHS, and DOJ implement the legislation consistently and will keep you updated with any developments. In the meantime, please alert your component about this legislation.

The TRIG History page has been updated: <http://ecn.uscis.dhs.gov/team/raio/TRIG/SitePages/TRIGHistory.aspx> and we will be revising the relevant paper in the Researched Organization library as well as all impacted training materials.

If your component encounters a case in which an exception outlined in 2(A) might apply, please ask the office to loop in local counsel and HQ TRIG POC.

Thank you,
Karen

H.R. 5515: John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019

Introduced:

Apr 13, 2018

115th Congress, 2017–2019

Status:

Enacted — Signed by the President on Aug 13, 2018

This bill was enacted after being signed by the President on August 13, 2018.

Law:

Pub.L. 115-232

SEC. 1291. TREATMENT OF RWANDAN PATRIOTIC FRONT AND RWANDAN PATRIOTIC ARMY UNDER IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT.

(a) **REMOVAL OF TREATMENT AS TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.**—

H. R. 5515—449

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Rwandan Patriotic Army shall be excluded from the definition of terrorist organization (as defined in section 212(a)(3)(B)(vi)(III) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)(vi)(III))) for purposes of such section 212(a)(3)(B) for any period before August 1, 1994.

(2) **EXCEPTION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State, in consultation

with the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, or the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Attorney General, as applicable, may suspend the application of paragraph (1) for the Rwandan Patriotic Front or the Rwandan Patriotic Army in the sole and unreviewable discretion of such applicable Secretary.

(B) REPORT.—Not later than, or contemporaneously with, a suspension of paragraph (1) under subparagraph (A), the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security, as applicable, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the justification for such suspension.

(b) RELIEF FROM INADMISSIBILITY.—

(1) ACTIVITIES BEFORE AUGUST 1, 1994.—Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)) shall not apply to an alien with respect to any activity undertaken by the alien in association with the Rwandan Patriotic Front or the Rwandan Patriotic Army before August 1, 1994.

(2) EXCEPTIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply if the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Homeland Security, as applicable, determines in the sole unreviewable discretion of such applicable Secretary that—

(i) in the totality of the circumstances, such alien—

(I) poses a threat to the safety and security of the United States; or

(II) does not merit a visa, admission to the United States, or a grant of an immigration benefit or protection; or

(ii) such alien committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the commission of—

(I) an offense described in section 2441 of title 18, United States Code; or

(II) an offense described in Presidential Proclamation 8697, dated August 4, 2011.

(B) IMPLEMENTATION.—Subparagraph (A) shall be implemented by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Attorney General.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—

(1) the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Foreign Relations, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Homeland Security, and

H. R. 5515—450

the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5515>

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Pinkham, Tara A
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 11:51 AM
To: Raufer, Susan
Subject: FW: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?
Attachments: Bio for PSOT 2017.docx

Hi Sue:

Here is Hawk's bio. He will arrive at Kingsland at 2:02 pm. I'll pick him up. Not sure how much time we'll have before the training, but I'll let you know when we are about to start so you can do his intro.

Thanks,

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [redacted]

Phone: [redacted]

(b)(6)

Fax: 201-531-1877

 Please consider the environment before printing this message, including any attachments.

From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:Hawthorne.Smith@nyulangone.org]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 12:34 PM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Tara.

That all sounds fine. Thanks for the extra "TLC" as well - lol! I'm catching a 1:36 train out of Penn Station that will connect me to the local line to Kingsland. I should be there a 2:02. I hope that's not living too dangerously. I am attaching my bio and am looking forward to seeing you. Again, my cell is [redacted] - just in case. Let me know if I should take a Lyft from Kingsland if it's cutting too close for you.

(b)(6)

Best, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016

[redacted]

(b)(6)

www.survivorsoftorture.org

Follow us on [Facebook](#)

From: Pinkham, Tara A [redacted] (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2018 8:43:57 AM
To: Smith, Hawthorne
Subject: RE: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:
(b)(6)

[redacted] Let me know if you need me to get you anything to help you get through the training. I have a ton of cough drops and Gatorade. My co-worker has a soothing tea for sore throats. Just a heads up the training room can sometimes be cold, so you may want to bring an extra layer.

If possible, we would like you to present between 1 hour and 1.5 hours and then have time for questions. Also, expect the AOs to ask questions about burnout and exhaustion. This year has been particularly challenging.

Can you please forward me your bio?

Let me know what time your train gets to Lyndhurst and I'll be there in either a black or grey Ford Fusion. Take the stairs to the street level and I'll be waiting there for you. If you need to reach me, you can call my cell at [redacted]

We are really looking forward to your training. (b)(6)

See you soon.

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071
Email [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]
Fax: 201-531-1877

(b)(6)

 Please consider the environment before printing this message, including any attachments.

From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:[redacted]] (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2018 5:17 PM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Tara,
(b)(6)

Sorry for the late reply. [redacted] Don't worry, I'll definitely be there tomorrow. I have had to move some things around since I was out today, so I unfortunately won't be available for lunch before the training. Let me check the train schedules tomorrow morning and let you know when I will be arriving at Kingsland. I appreciate you offering to pick me up.

I did a similar training last week for Sanctuary for Families and they wanted me to present for roughly an hour with time for Q and A. Is this about what you wanted as well, or should I plan on presenting for a longer segment of the scheduled time?

My cell is [redacted] should you need to reach me tonight or tomorrow morning.

Best, Hawk (b)(6)

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016

[Redacted]

(b)(6)

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From: Pinkham, Tara A [Redacted]

(b)(6)

Sent: Monday, September 24, 2018 11:41:50 AM

To: Smith, Hawthorne

Subject: RE: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

Sure, you can get back to me later today or tomorrow.

Thank you again for hosting this training with us!

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [Redacted]

Phone: [Redacted]

(b)(6)

Fax: 201-531-1877

 Please consider the environment before printing this message, including any attachments.

From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:[Redacted]]

(b)(6)

Sent: Monday, September 24, 2018 11:40 AM

To: Pinkham, Tara A

Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Tara,

This is a generous offer, and I'm still trying to finalize my morning schedule on Wednesday to see if I will be able to take you up on it. If I can get back to you later today or tomorrow morning at the latest, will that be OK?

Best, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016

[Redacted]

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From: Pinkham, Tara A [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 24, 2018 9:52:46 AM
To: Smith, Hawthorne; Smith, Hawthorne
Subject: FW: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

I wanted to follow-up on my previous email to see if you were interested in attending lunch with the Newark asylum office's director on Wednesday before your training.

Thank you.

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [REDACTED] (b)(6)
Phone: [REDACTED]
Fax: 201-531-1877

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From: Pinkham, Tara A
Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2018 9:01 AM
To: 'Smith, Hawthorne'
Subject: RE: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

Your PPT looks great! Thank you for sharing. I'll have this uploaded to the training room computer for you next week. We are looking forward to your training.

We can start discussing logics if you are available and can set-up a call if you like. Although my office cannot provide an honorarium, our director would like to take you out to lunch before the training. We can pay for your transportation to our office. You can take an NJ Transit bus from Port Authority to our office. If you prefer the train, you can also take the NJ Transit train to Kingsland or Rutherford and I can pick you up from the train station. Let me know what you are thinking in terms of lunch and transportation.

Thank you.

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED] (b)(6)
Fax: 201-531-1877

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From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:[REDACTED]] (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, September 18, 2018 5:35 PM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Tara,

I hope you are well. Please find attached my Power Point presentation. I guess we can talk as the day approaches about transportation and other logistics. I'm looking forward to it.

Best, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016

[REDACTED] (b)(6)

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From: Pinkham, Tara A <tara.a.pinkham@uscis.dhs.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 11, 2018 3:55:45 PM
To: Smith, Hawthorne
Subject: RE: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

Great! We are looking forward to your presentation. Please email me the PPT you want to use and I can make sure it is ready to go on 9/26.

Enjoy the rest of the week!

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [REDACTED] (b)(6)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Fax: 201-531-1877

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From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:[REDACTED]] (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, September 06, 2018 12:09 PM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Cc: Raufer, Susan
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Tara,

That date is still fine. I'll just want to use PowerPoint - so if you can help me make that happen, I'll be most appreciative.

Regards, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016

[redacted] (b)(6)

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From: Pinkham, Tara A [redacted] (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, September 5, 2018 10:06:44 AM
To: Smith, Hawthorne
Cc: Raufer, Susan
Subject: FW: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

How are you? I hope you are enjoying the last (hot) vestiges of summer. It is too humid for me. I'm ready for the fall. I wanted to send a friendly reminder that we have you penciled in for a vicarious trauma training on 9/26/2018 from 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm at the Newark Asylum Office. Does this date still work for you? Also, do you need anything from us to help you prepare for the training?

Thank you.

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [redacted] (b)(6)

Phone: [redacted]

Fax: 201-531-1877

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From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:[redacted]] (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, June 08, 2018 11:37 AM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Cc: Raufer, Susan
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Thank you so much. I'm looking forward to it.
I hope you both enjoy the weekend!

Best, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.


Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016



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From: Pinkham, Tara A < > (b)(6)
Sent: Friday, June 8, 2018 8:42:05 AM
To: Smith, Hawthorne
Cc: Raufer, Susan
Subject: RE: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Hawk:

Great! I'll pencil you in for 9/26 from 2:30 – 4:30 pm. I'll send you a reminder email in early September. We are looking forward to your training. I mentioned your name to our director, Sue Raufer, and she remembered the great trainings you gave at FLETC. She says hello. I've cc'ed her on this email as well.

Have a wonderful weekend.


Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email:  (b)(6)

Phone: 

Fax: 201-531-1877

 Please consider the environment before printing this message, including any attachments.

From: Smith, Hawthorne [mailto:] (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, June 07, 2018 4:21 PM
To: Pinkham, Tara A
Subject: Re: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

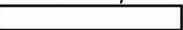
Hi Tara,

It was very nice to meet you as well. Let's pencil in the afternoon of 9/26/18. I may need a little reminder earlier on in ?September, but I would be more than happy to come and present to you and your staff.

Best, Hawk

Hawthorne E. Smith, Ph.D.

Clinical Director; Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Associate Clinical Professor; NYU School of Medicine
462 First Ave. #CD 743
New York, NY 10016



(b)(6)

[Redacted]

(b)(6)

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From: Pinkham, Tara A <[Redacted]> (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, June 7, 2018 3:06:12 PM
To: Smith, Hawthorne
Subject: Training at the Newark Asylum Office?

Hi Dr. Smith:

I thoroughly enjoyed your discussion last night on working with survivors of torture. You brought up excellent points about offering humanity amongst the chaos within which we work. I loved the story you told of a client feeling at ease when she learned you were going to be her clinician since she remembered that you provided her with a glass of water the last time you two met.

As I mentioned last night, we would love for you to host a vicarious trauma training at our office. As you know, our officers hear intense stories all week and can benefit significantly from this training. Our trainings are on Wednesday afternoons from 2:30 – 4:30 pm at our office located in Lyndhurst. Our training schedule is open on 9/26 and 10/10. Please let me know if you would be interested in hosting this training at our office and if any of the proposed dates work. We can also modify our schedule to have a training on a non-Wednesday afternoon if we have advance notice.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Tara Pinkham
Training Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall St West, 4th Fl
Newark, NJ 07071

Email: [Redacted]

Phone: [Redacted] (b)(6)

Fax: 201-531-1877

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(b)(6)

Dr. Smith is a

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Friday, October 14, 2016 9:05 AM
To: Swen, Oluremi A (Remi)
Subject: FW: Your credibility training
Attachments: China_refer cred.doc; China_refer cred notes.docx; COTE D'IVOIRE POL OP CRED ASSESSMENT TO REFER.docx; COTE D'IVOIRE notes.docx

From: Vitiello, Lauren M
Sent: Monday, October 03, 2016 11:38 AM
To: Raufer, Susan
Subject: Your credibility training

I did nothing more than scrub all PII from the assessments and notes for these two cases that are credibility referrals. I did not vet much for utility, but from what I did vet it seems there is a lot to work with.

Hope this helps.

Lauren Vitiello

Training Officer | DHS | USCIS | Newark Asylum Office

1200 Wall St. West, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071 | ☎

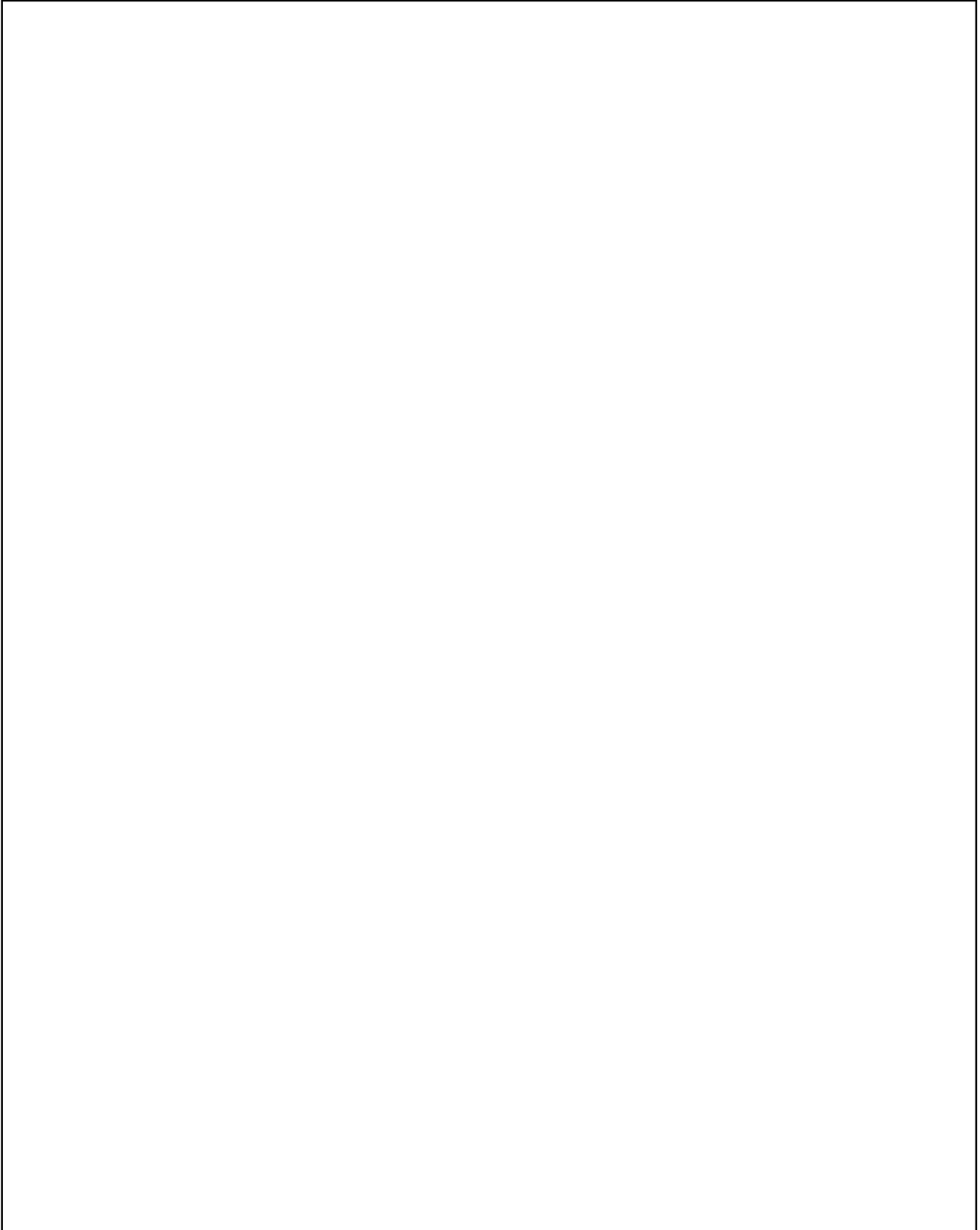
[REDACTED] fax 201.531.1877 | ✉ [REDACTED]

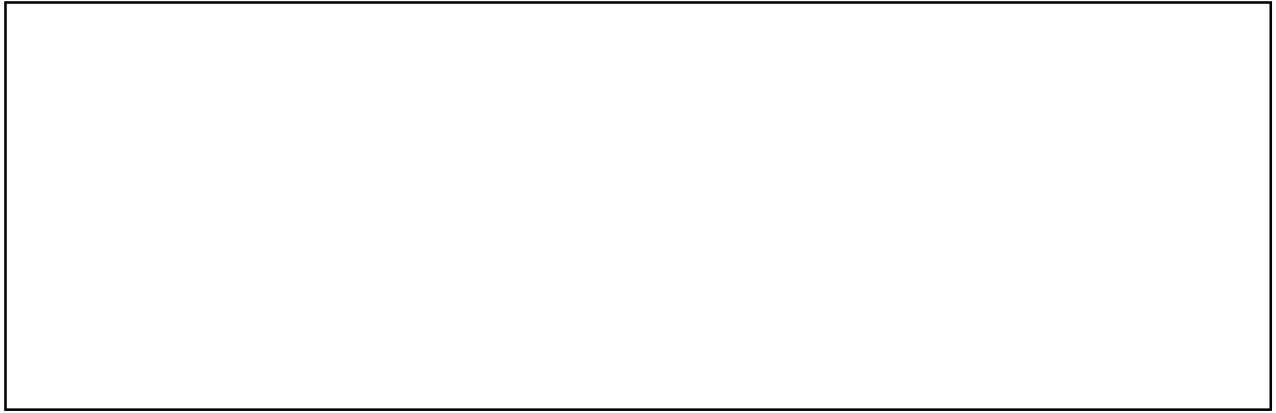
“Kindness Matters”

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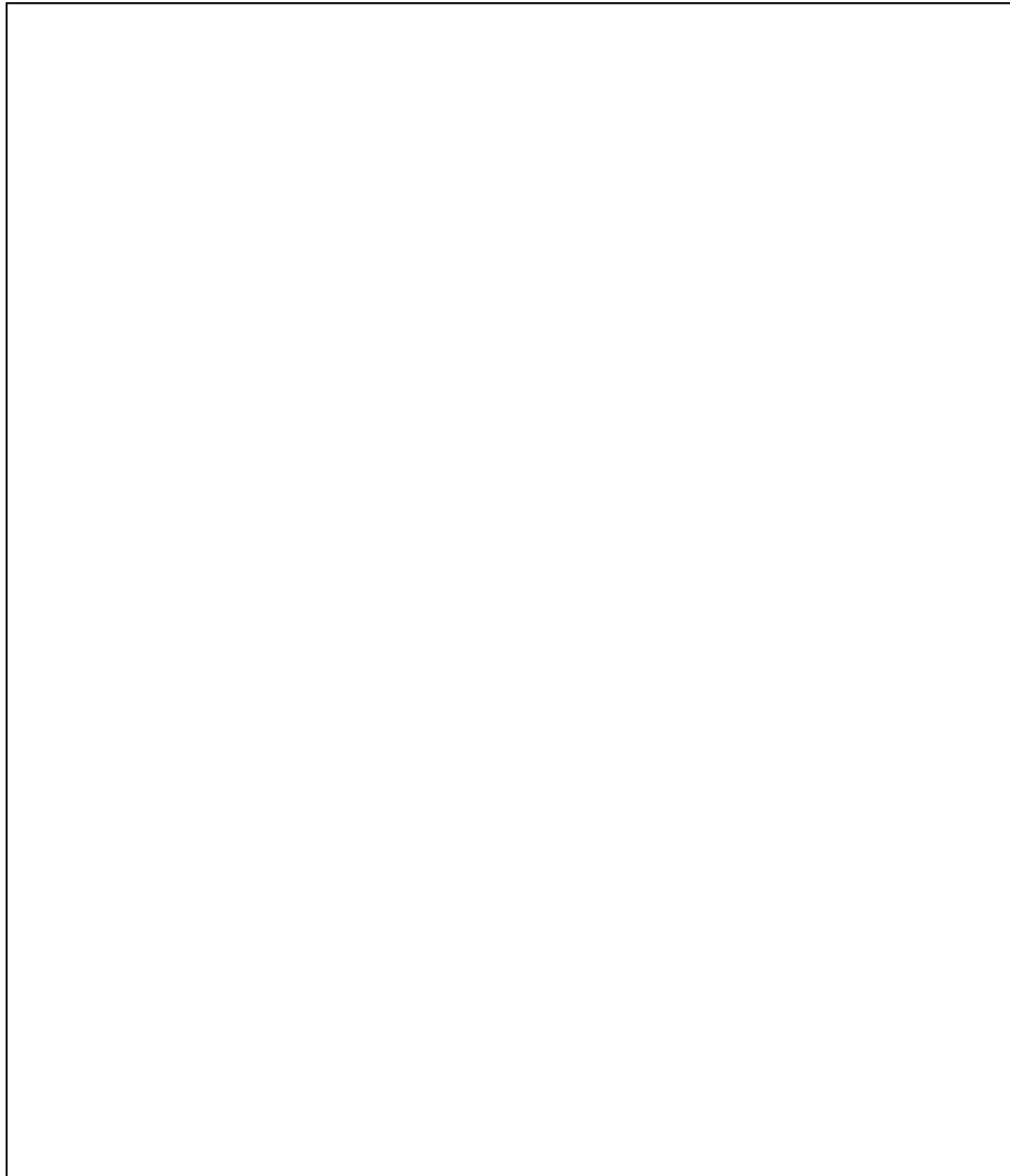
A #: XXX XXX XXX

Date: 06/28/ 2016

CALL APPLICANT

Introduction

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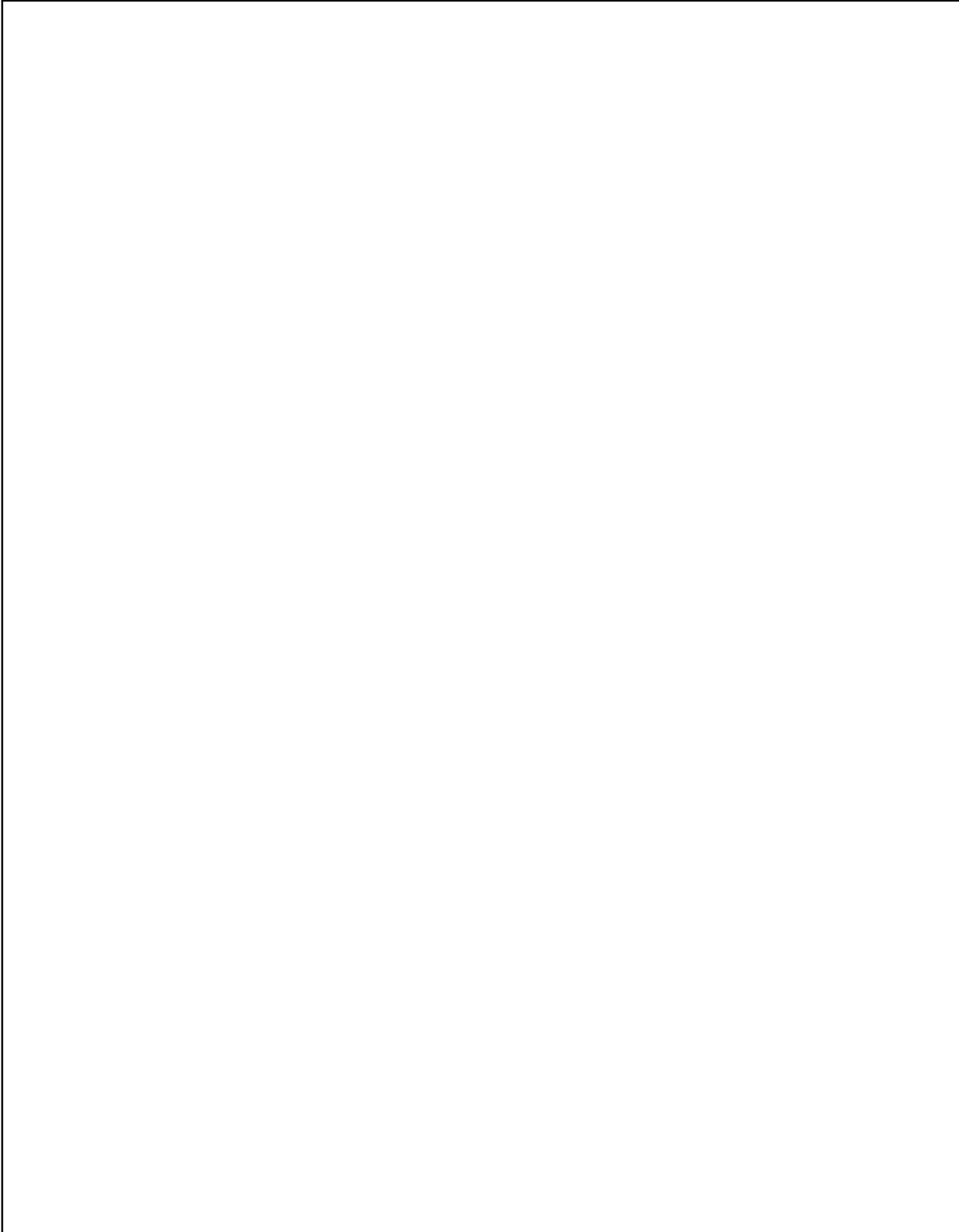


Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

Date: 06/28/2016

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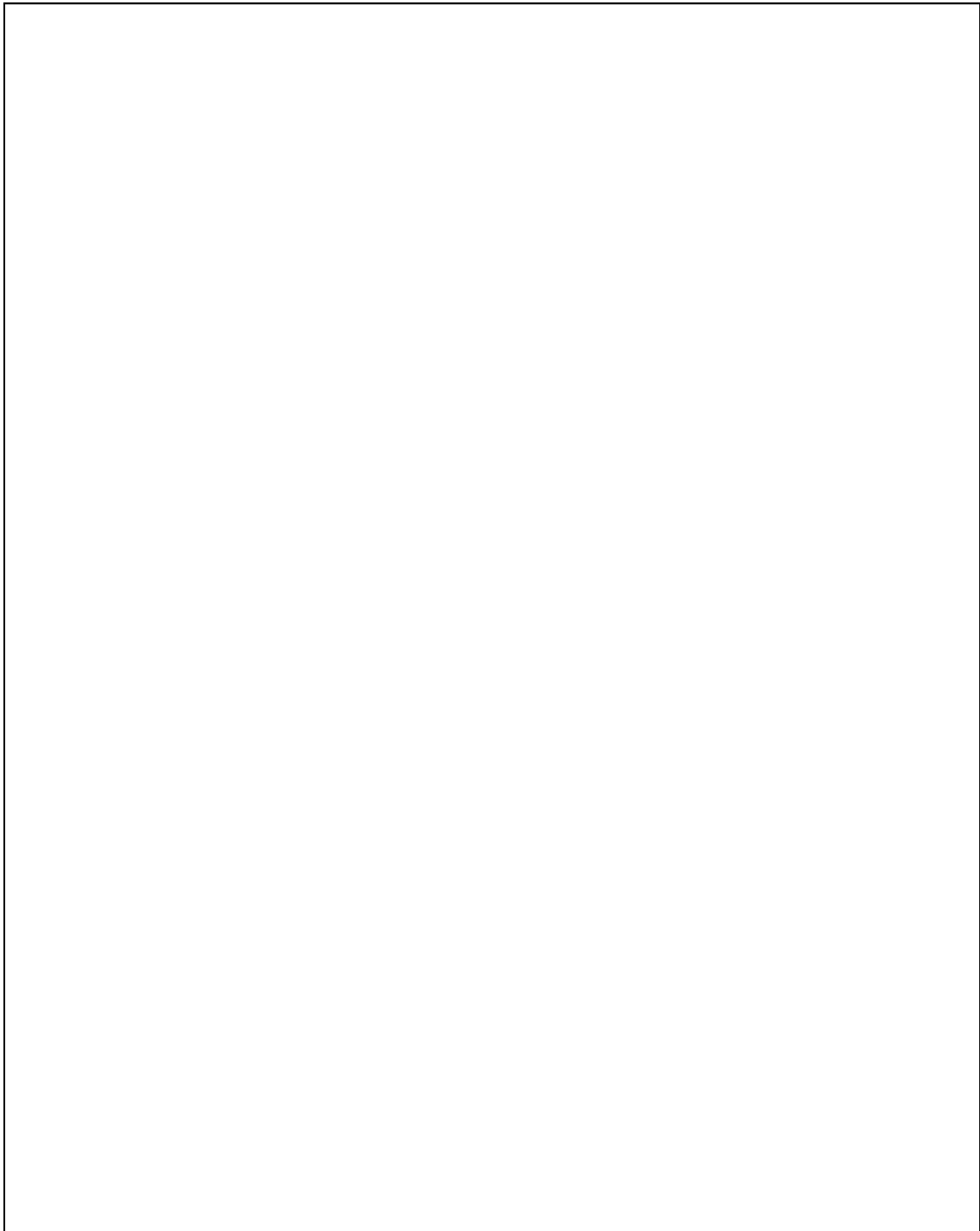


Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

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Date: 06/28/ 2016

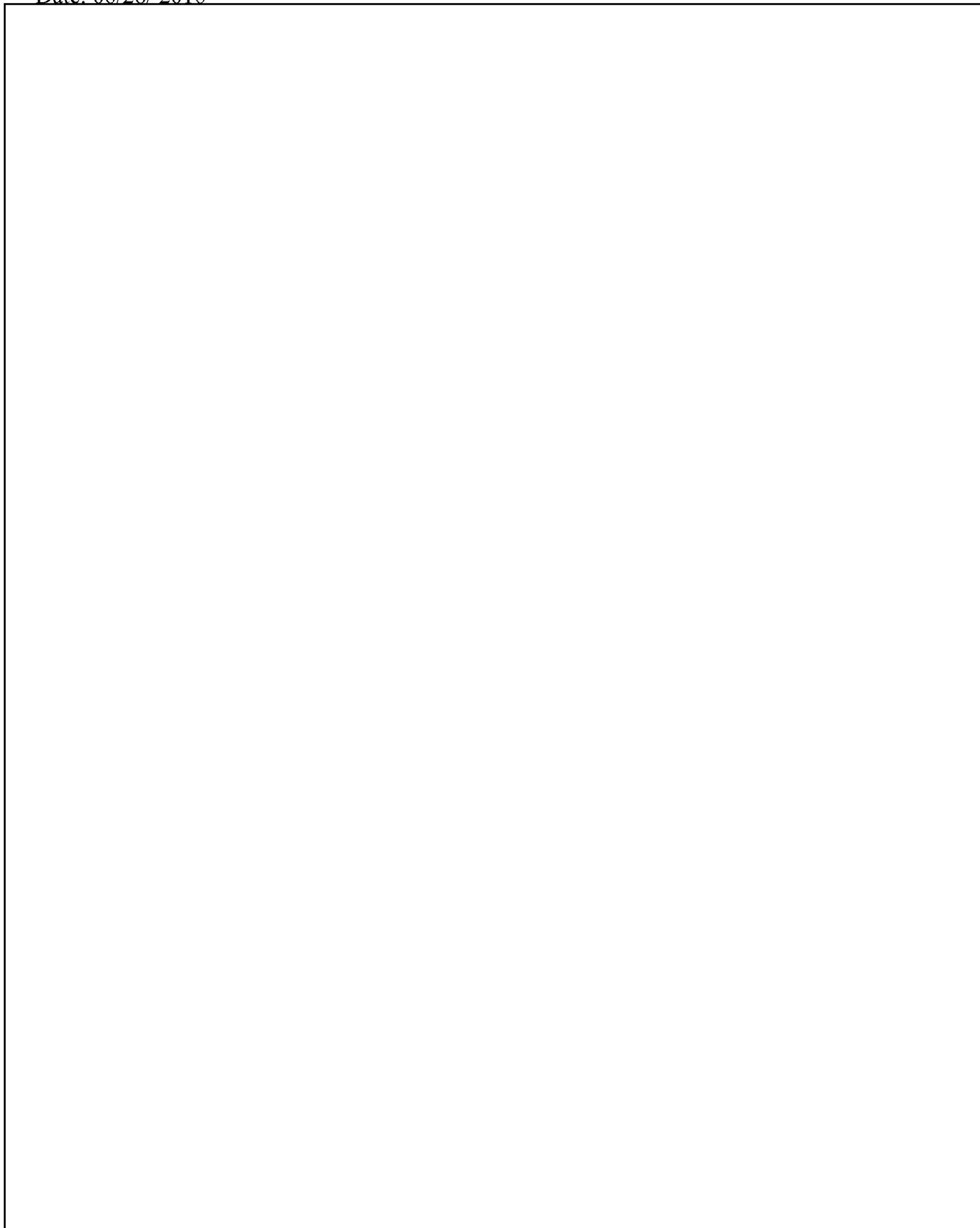


Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

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Date: 06/28/2016



Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

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Date: 06/28/ 2016



Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

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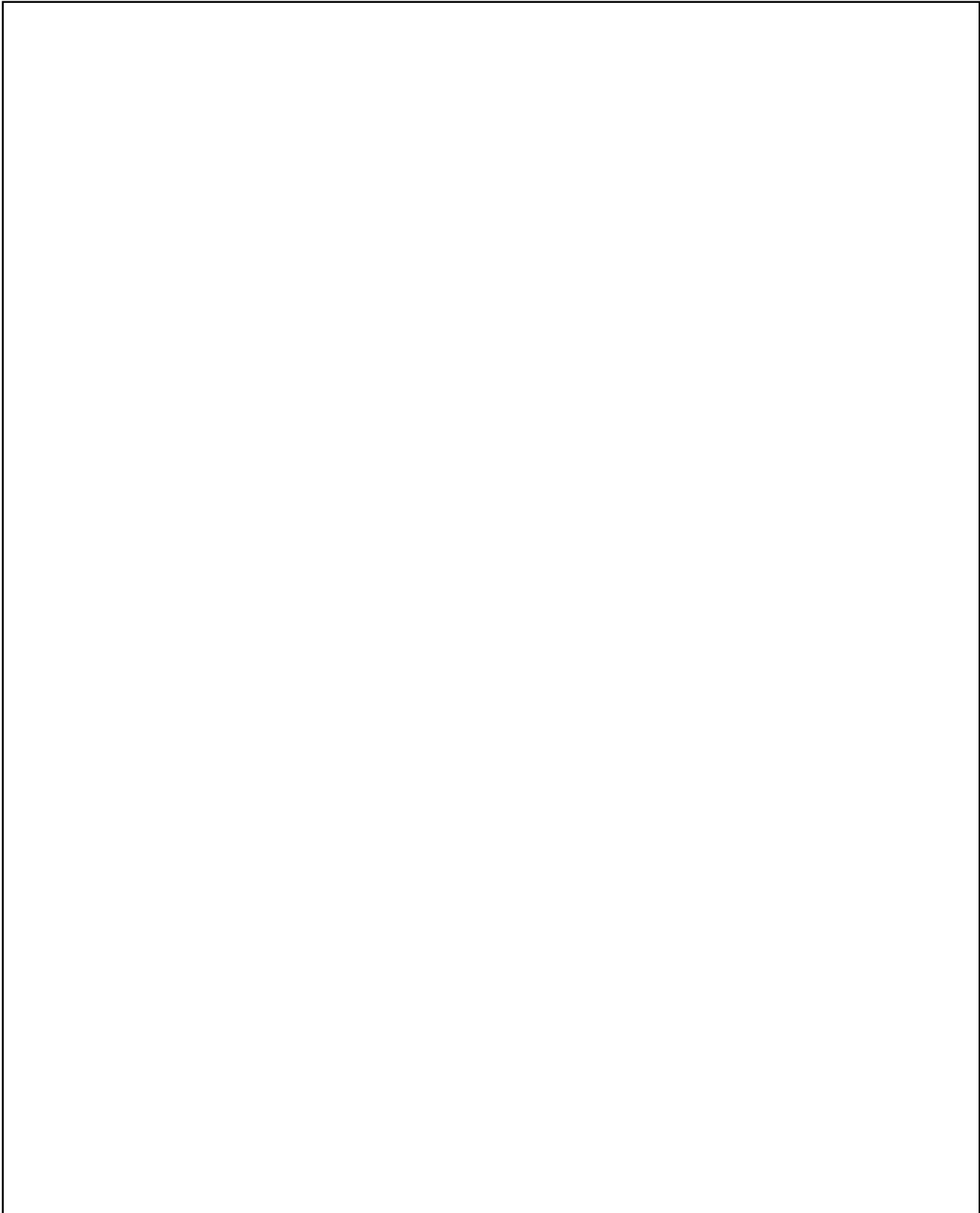
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Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

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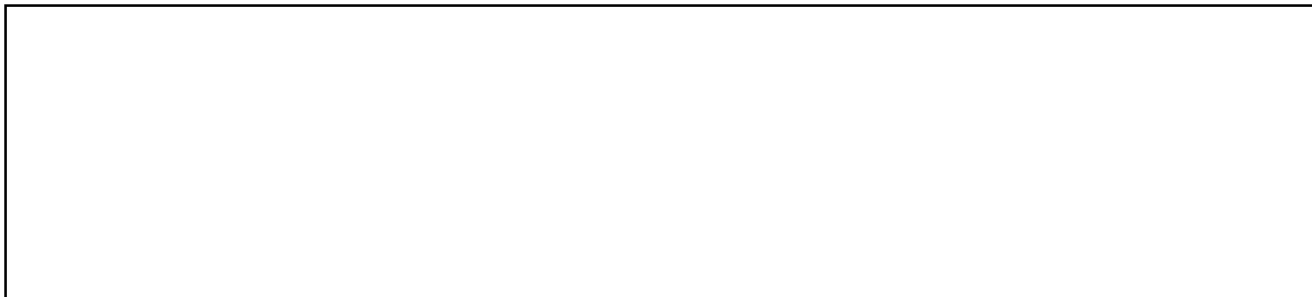
Date: 06/28/ 2016



Officer Name: Applicant Name:

A #: XXX XXX XXX

Date: 06/28/ 2016



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ASSESSMENT TO REFER

ALIEN NUMBER: XXX XXX XXX

ASSESSMENT DATE: August 19, 2016

NAME:

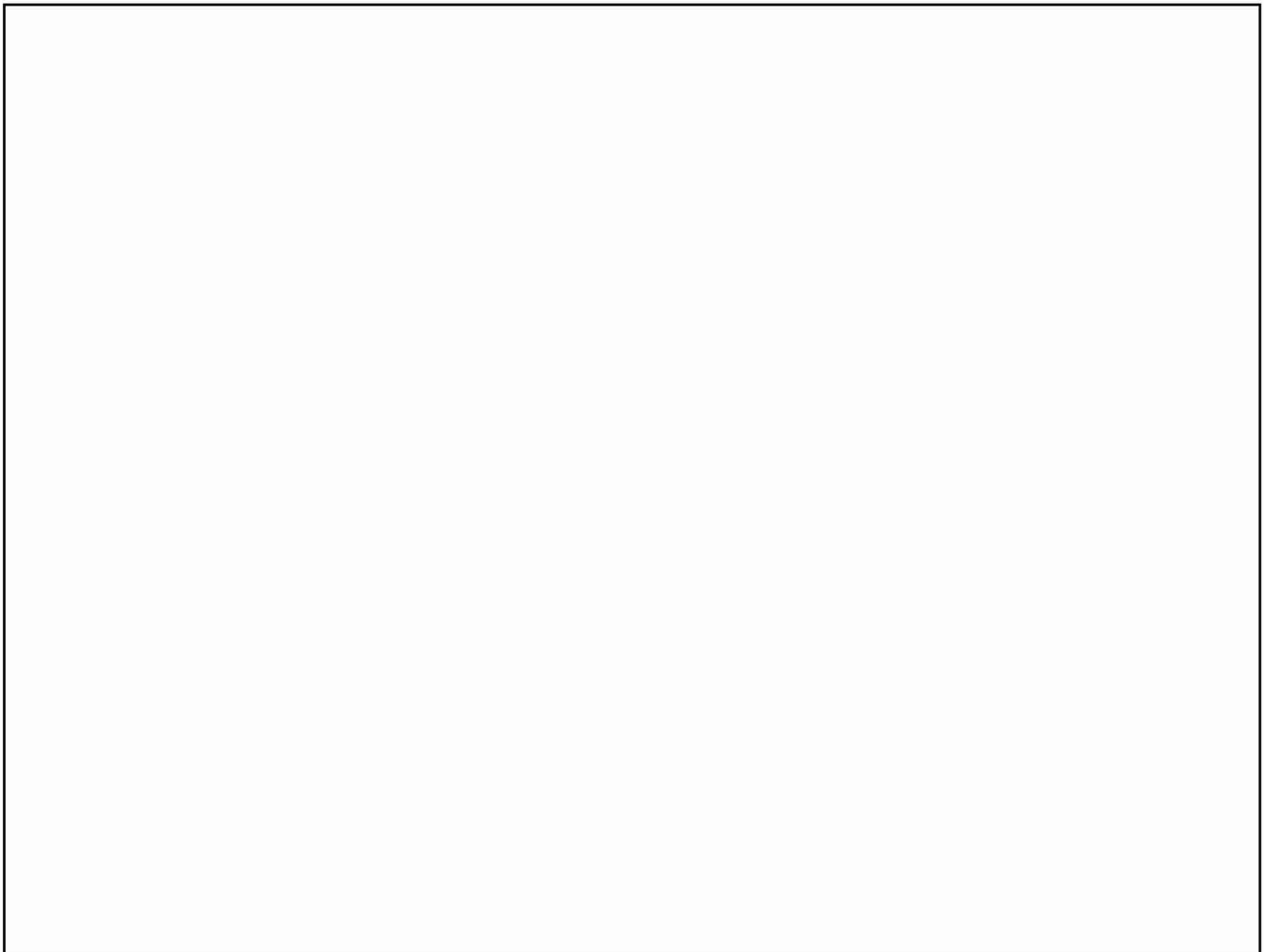
ASYLUM OFFICER:

COUNTRY: Cote D'Ivoire

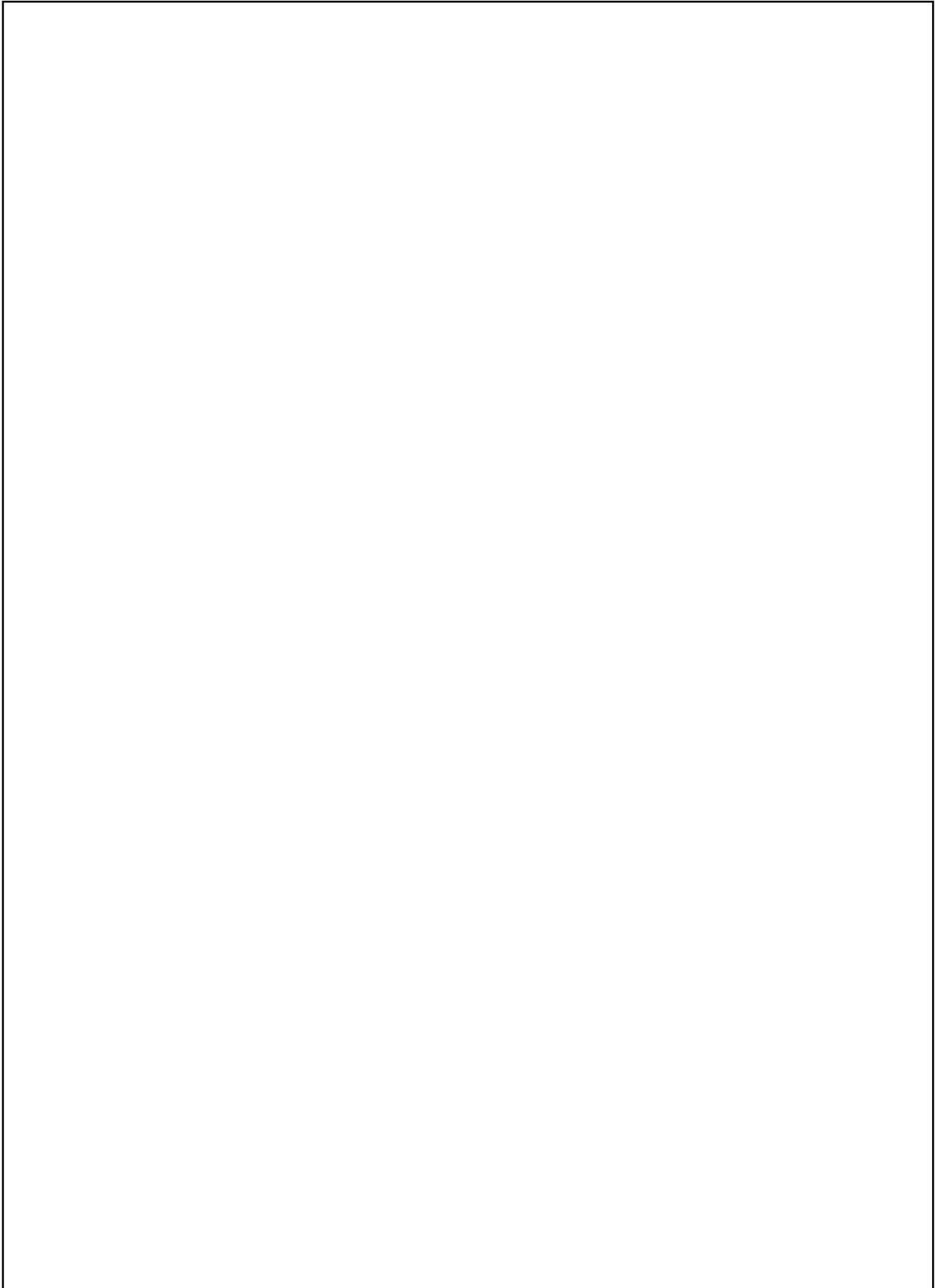
REVIEWING SAO:

LOCATION: ZNK

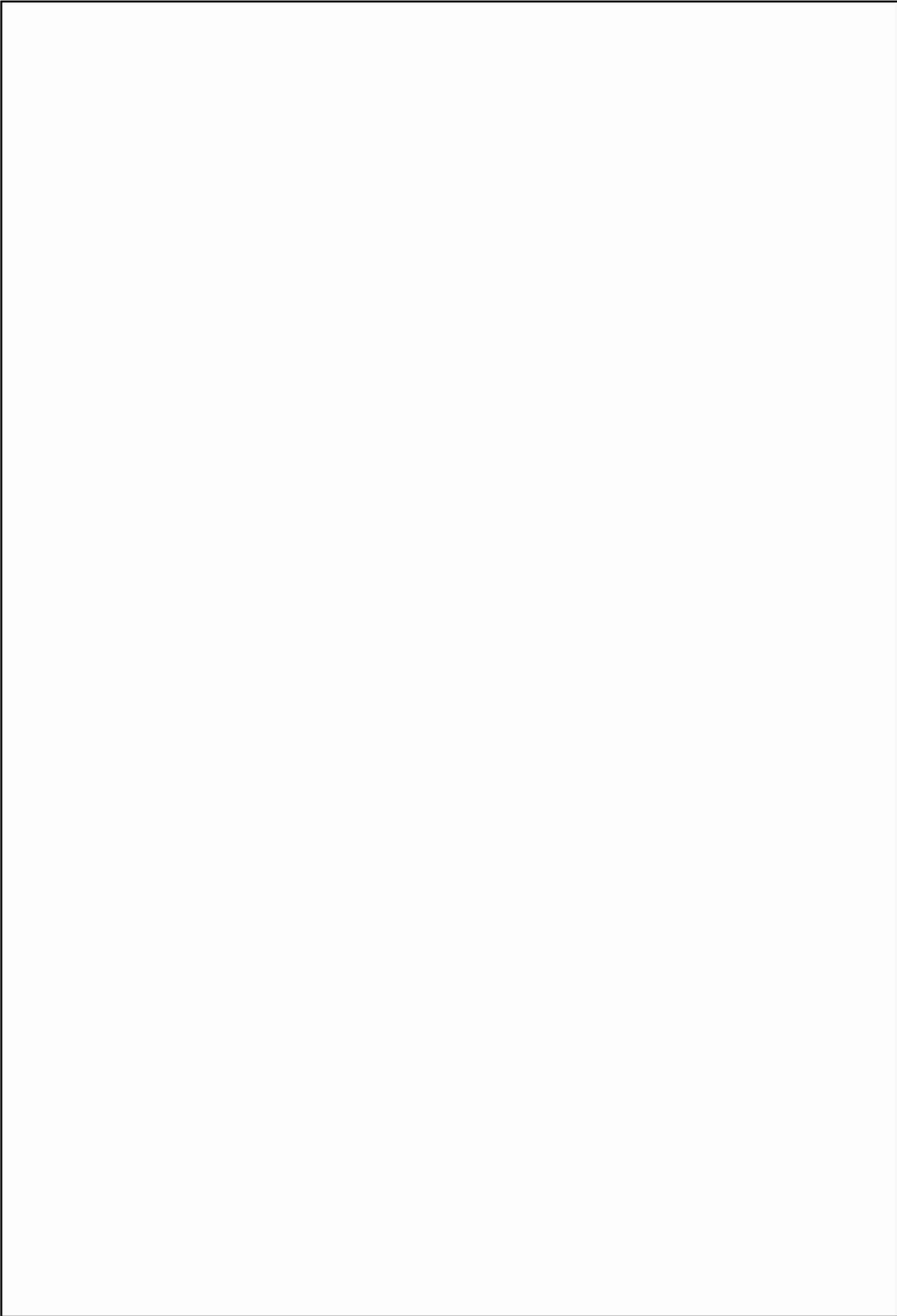
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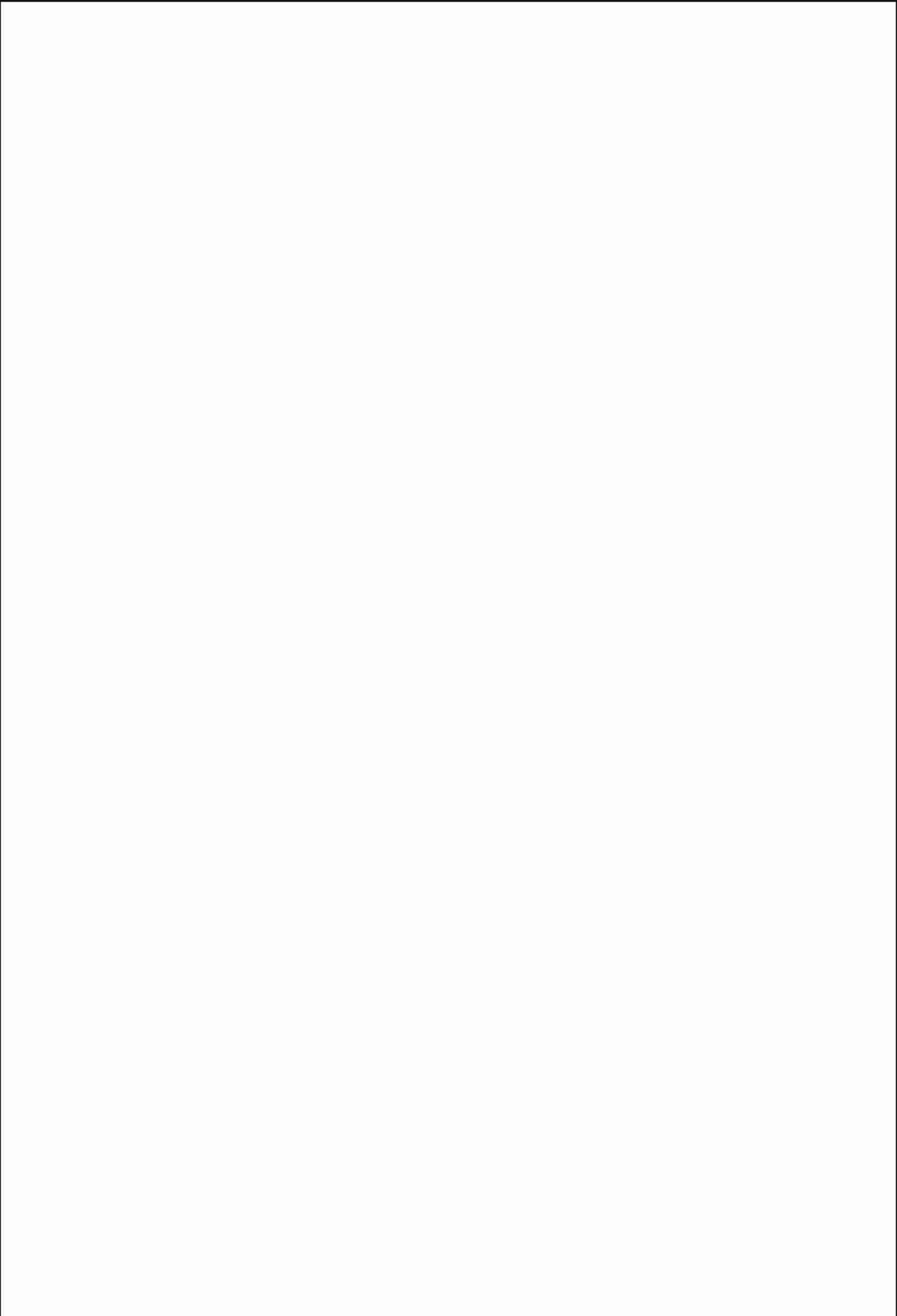
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Name:
Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016

(b)(6) (b)(7)(e)

CALL APPLICANT



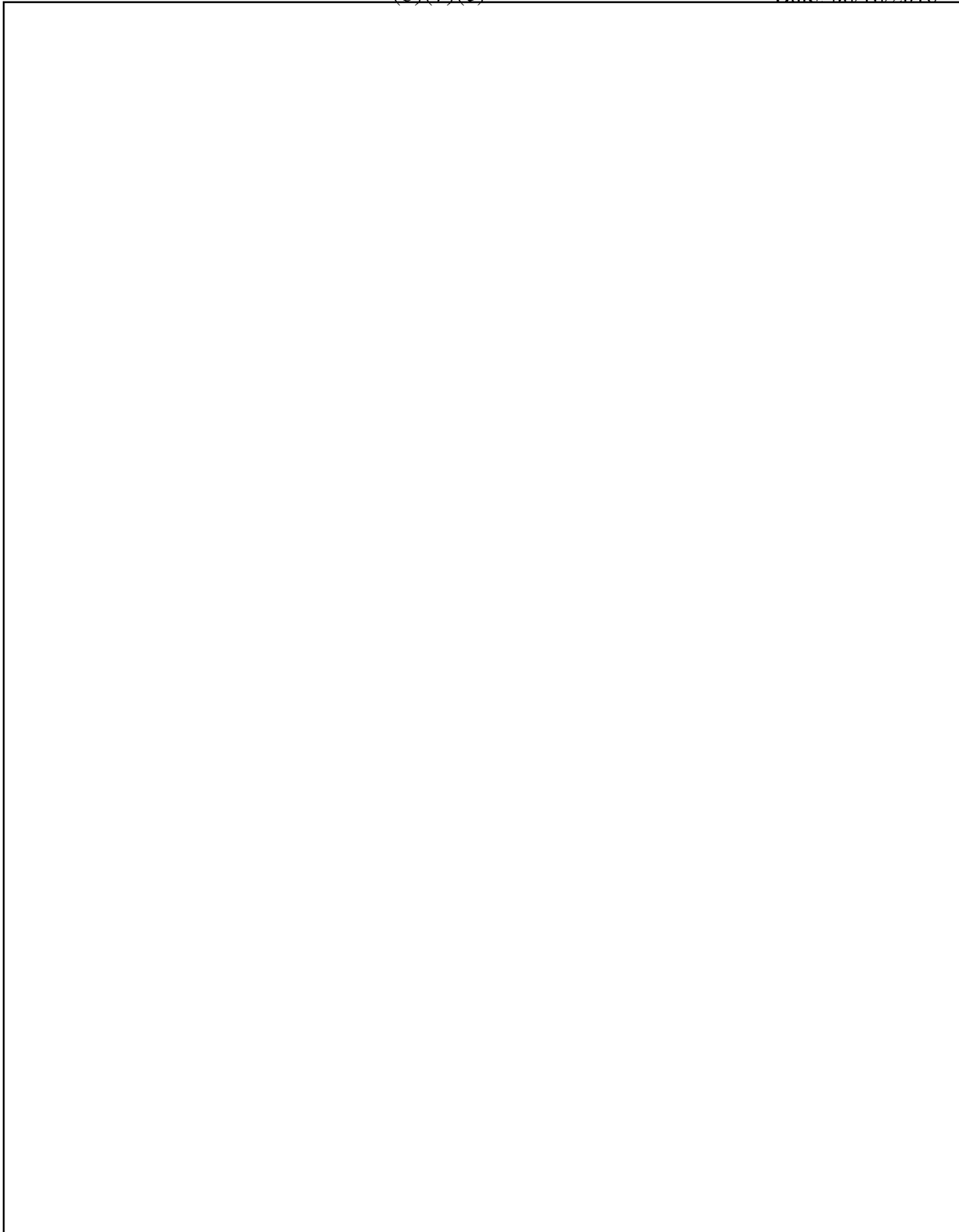
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Applicant Name:

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Date: 08/18/2016

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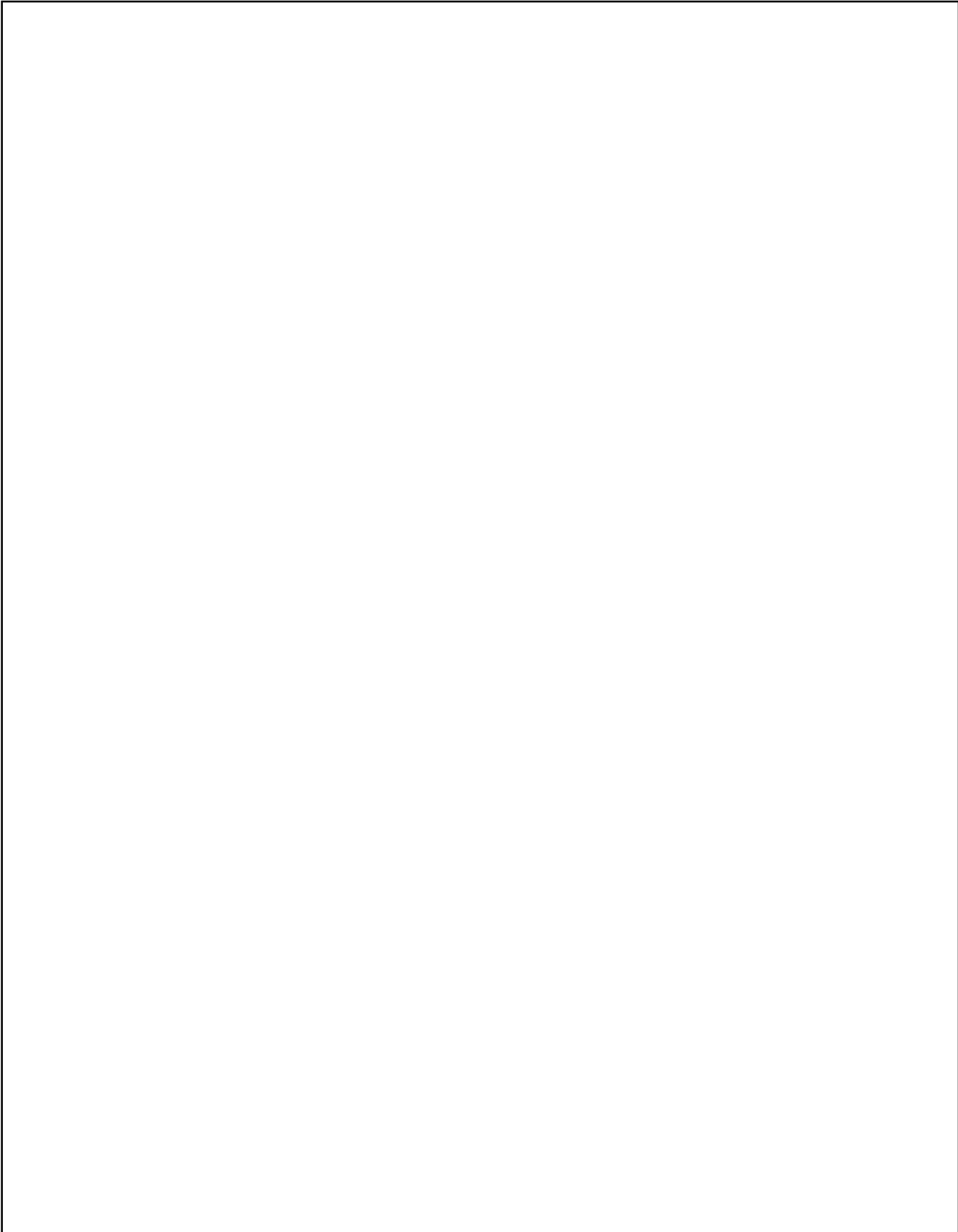
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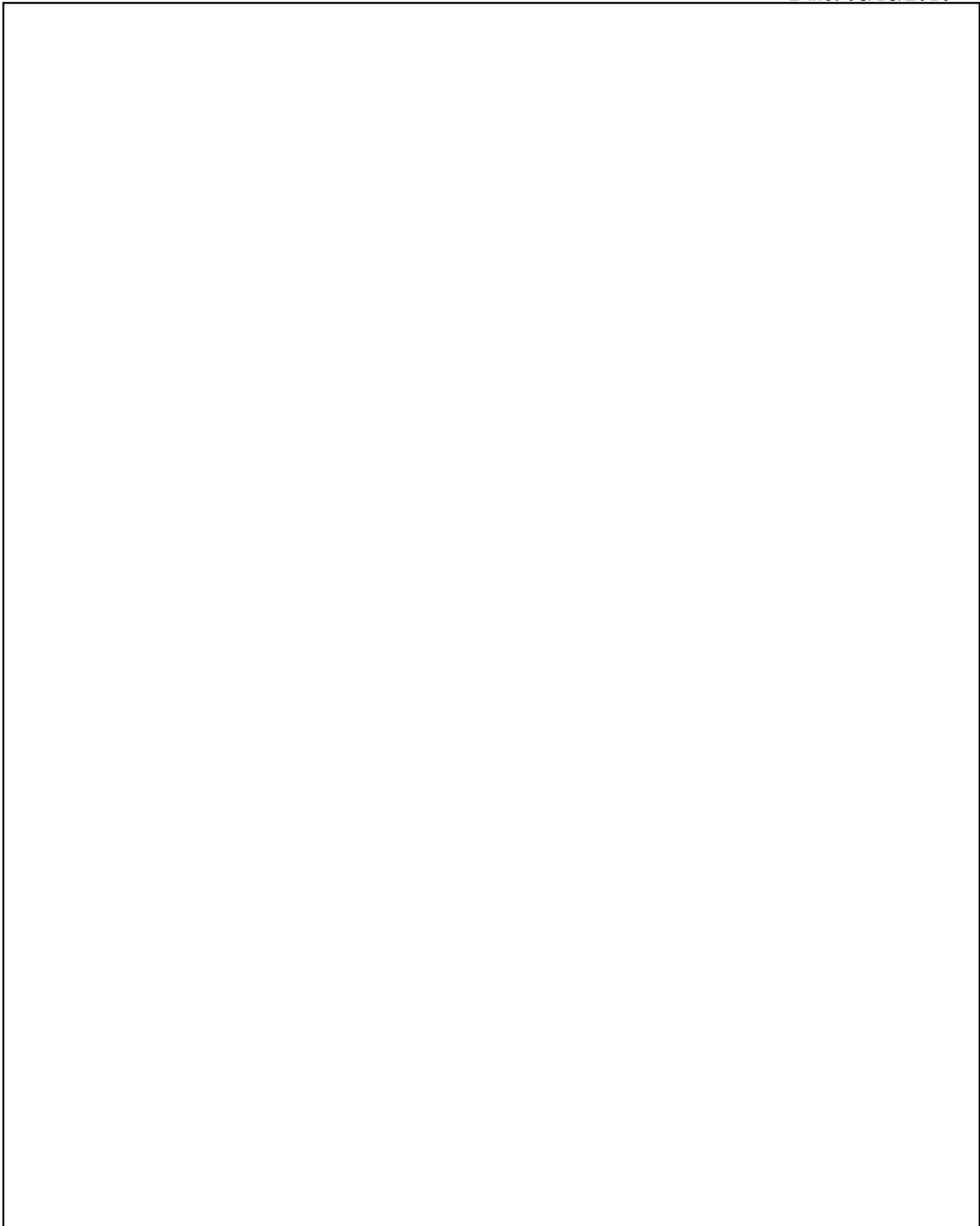
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Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
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Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016

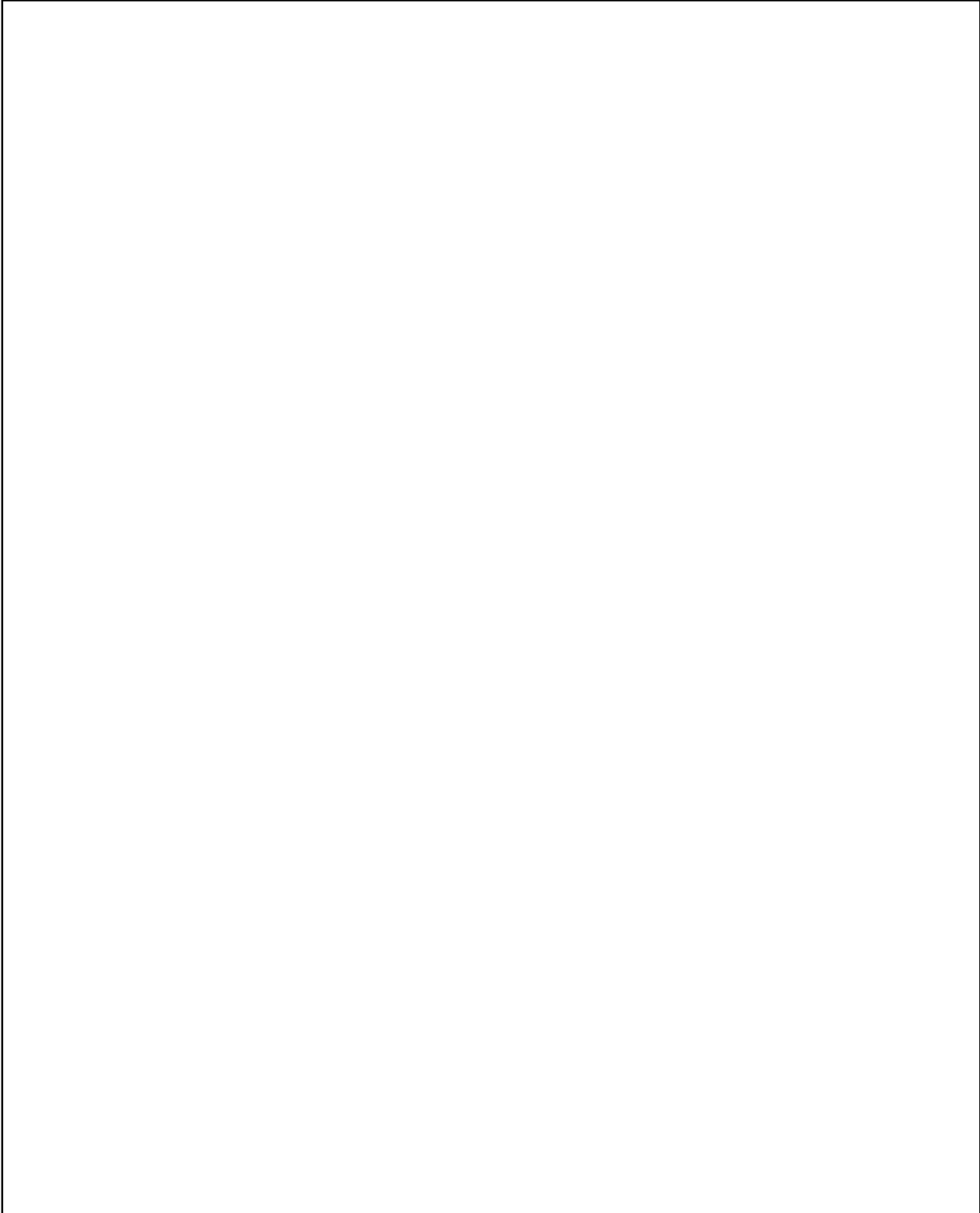


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Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016

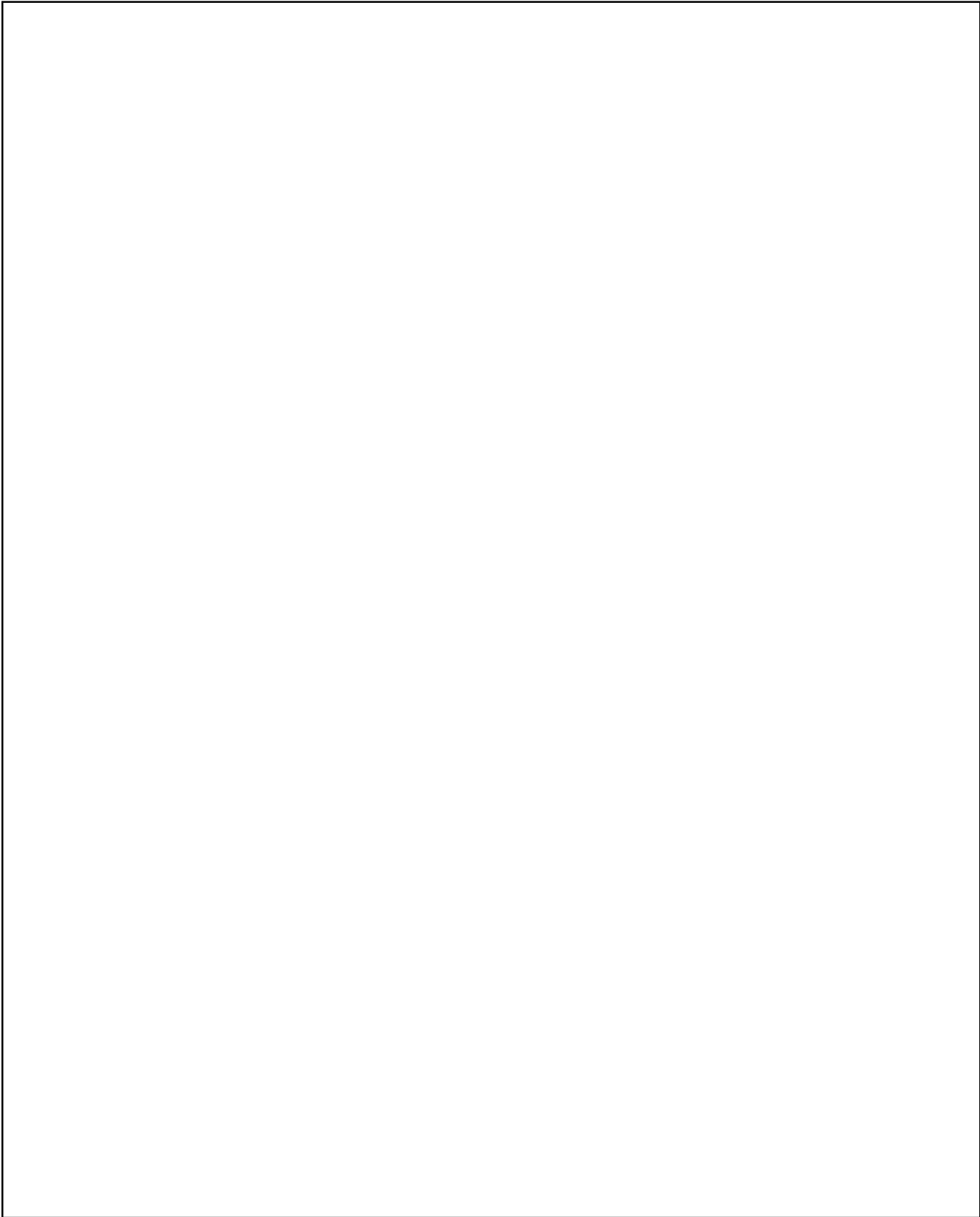
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A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016



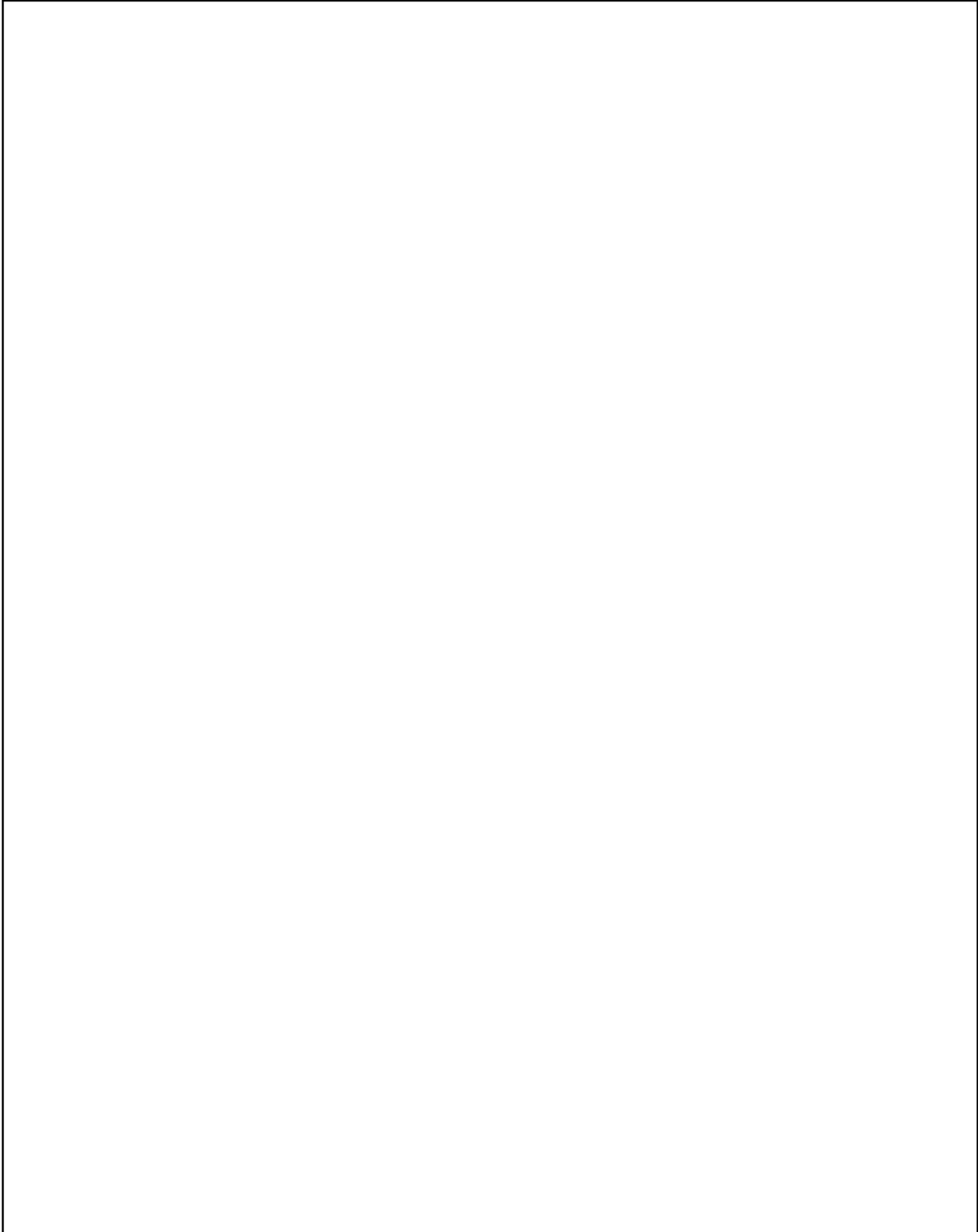
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Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016



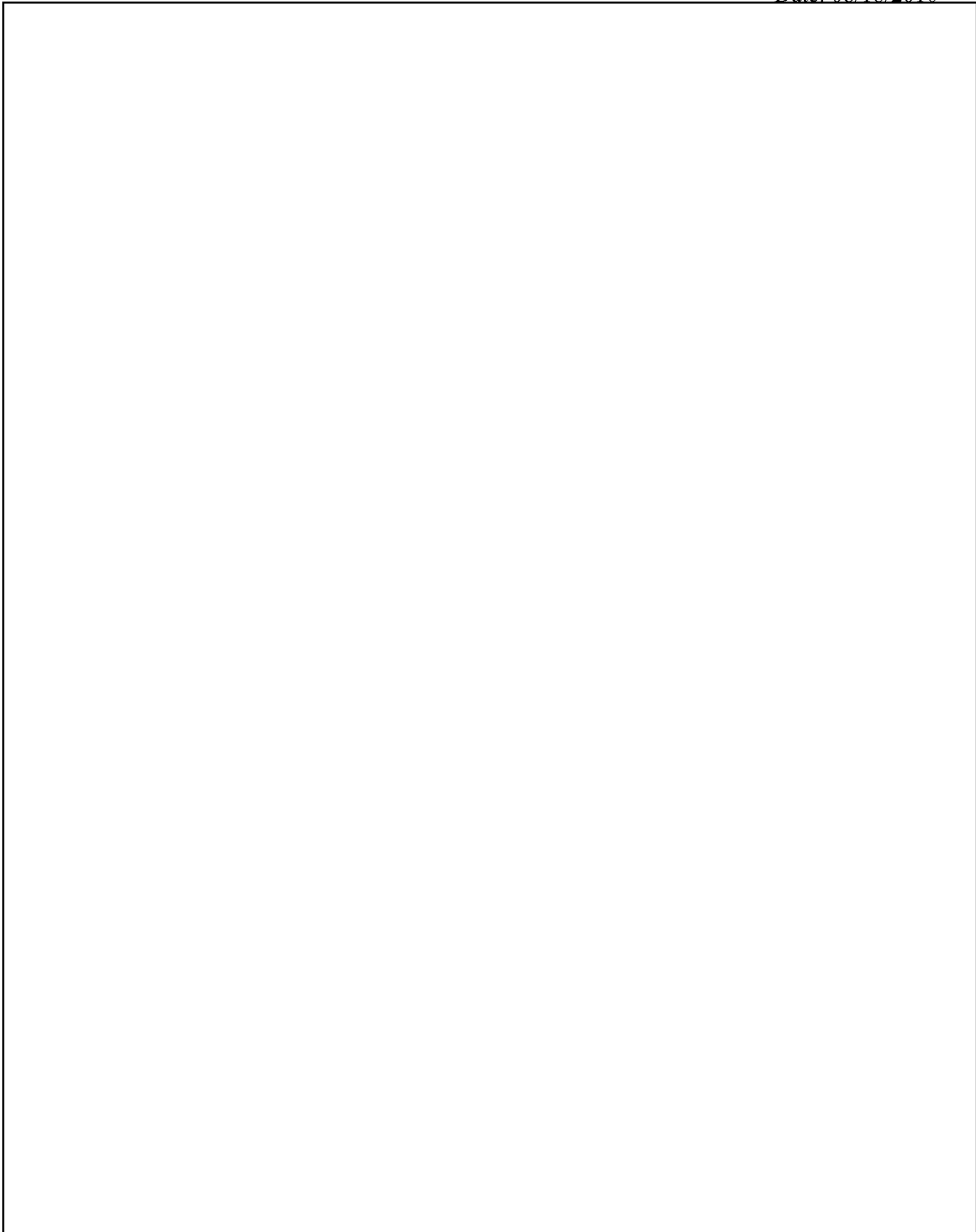
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Name:
Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016



(b)(6) (b)(7)(e)

Name:
Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016



Name:
Applicant Name:
A #: XXX XXX XXX
Date: 08/18/2016

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Boyle, Meghann W
Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2015 11:08 AM
To: Blauvelt, Sally; Raufer, Susan
Cc: Varghese, Sunil R; Heinrich, Lorie R
Subject: RE: Advisory: Tomorrow, King to Announce Federal Legislation to Support Maine's Refugee Population on Steps of Portland City Hall

Wow, that would be quite a change for us! Thanks for passing this along!

Meghann Boyle
Sub-Office Director
Boston Asylum Sub-Office
15 New Sudbury St., Ste. 600
Boston, MA 02203
PH: (b)(6)
FX: 617-565-9507

From: Blauvelt, Sally
Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2015 12:01 PM
To: Boyle, Meghann W; Raufer, Susan
Subject: FW: Advisory: Tomorrow, King to Announce Federal Legislation to Support Maine's Refugee Population on Steps of Portland City Hall
Importance: High

Thought you'd like to know! Also in the paper today...

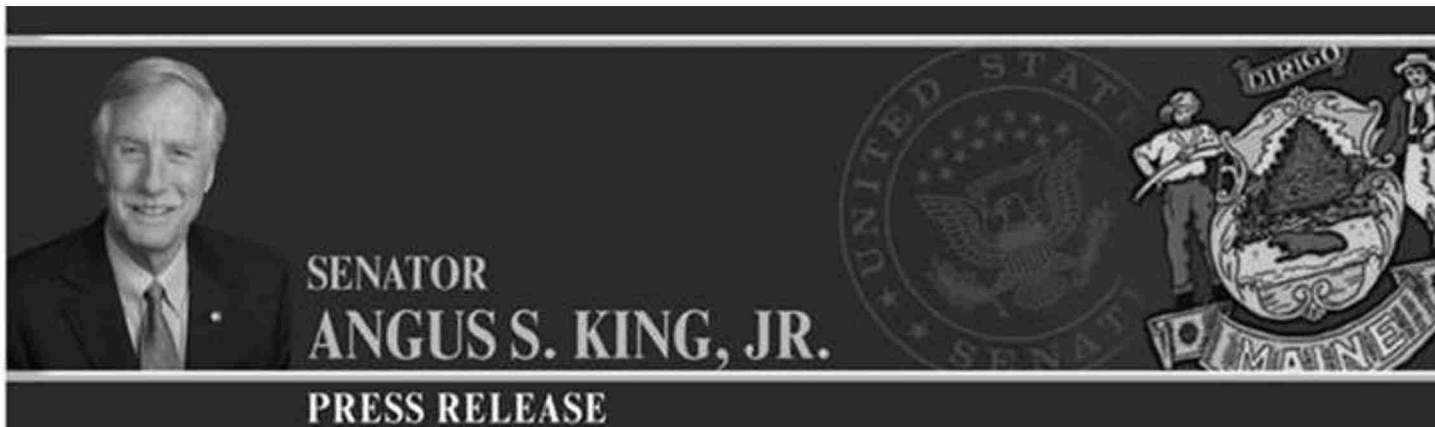
<http://www.pressherald.com/2015/07/30/sen-angus-king-coming-to-portland-to-begin-push-for-federal-fix-in-asylum-work-rules/>

Sally Blauvelt
Field Office Director, Maine
US Citizenship and Immigration Services
176 Gannett Drive, Portland, ME 04106

(b)(6)

Thought you'd like to

From: Ogden, Scott (King)
Sent: Thursday, July 30, 2015 8:55 AM
To: Ogden, Scott (King)
Subject: Advisory: Tomorrow, King to Announce Federal Legislation to Support Maine's Refugee Population on Steps of Portland City Hall



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 30, 2015

Contact: Kathleen Connery Dawe/Scott Ogden (202) 224-5344

Media Advisory

Tomorrow, King to Announce Federal Legislation to Support Maine's Refugee Population on Steps of Portland City Hall

Portland Mayor, Portland Chamber of Commerce CEO, Refugee from Burundi to speak in support of bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Tomorrow morning, U.S. Senator Angus King (I-Maine) will hold a press conference at Portland City Hall to announce that he is introducing federal legislation to shorten the waiting period in current law that prevents asylum seekers from pursuing work to support themselves and their families. The legislation, which would shorten the period from 150 to 30 days, would allow asylum seekers to become more independent and less reliant on general assistance provided by cities and towns across Maine.

Under current law, an asylum applicant must wait 150 days after the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services receives their complete application for citizenship, followed by an additional 30 day approval period, before they are able to receive a work authorization. Such a long waiting period places asylum seekers in a difficult position. Without any source of income, they are often left to rely on General Assistance funds provided by cities and towns throughout Maine in order to survive. Senator King's bill would reduce that waiting period to 30 days, which would allow an appropriate amount of time to conduct background checks while speeding up the timeframe for asylum seekers to pursue jobs in order to support themselves and become less reliant upon assistance from municipalities.

Portland Mayor Michael Brennan; Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce CEO Chris Hall; and Philemon Dushimire, an asylee from Burundi who went through the mandatory waiting period, will all speak in support of Senator King's legislation.

WHO: U.S. Senator Angus King
Mayor of Portland Michael Brennan
Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce CEO Chris Hall
Mr. Philemon Dushimire

WHAT: Press conference on federal legislation

WHEN: Friday, July 31, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

WHERE: Steps of Portland City Hall
389 Congress Street, Portland, Maine 04101

###



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Sen. Angus King coming to Portland to start push for change in asylum work rules

A shorter wait period before getting jobs would ease the city's immigrant assistance problem, but it will be an uphill battle in Congress.

BY RANDY BILLINGS STAFF WRITER



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Sen. Angus King of Maine plans to submit federal legislation to ease work restrictions on asylum seekers and reduce the need for the kind of assistance that Portland is struggling to provide to hundreds of immigrants living in the city.

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King, an independent, tried to address the work authorization delays for asylum applicants in 2013 as part of an unsuccessful attempt by Congress to overhaul the immigration system. He plans to come to Portland City Hall on Friday to announce new legislation that would cut asylum seekers' work authorization waiting period from 150 days to 30 days.

“Sen. King believes it’s time that we re-examine our immigration laws and find a way to allow asylum seekers to support themselves like they want to do, and his bill is a first step in that direction,” King spokesman Scott Ogden said in a written statement Wednesday.

Advocates for immigration reform support the push to change federal law, but doubt such legislation will go far in Congress, where immigration is a divisive issue.

“There’s a bit of a stalemate when it comes to

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immigration reform and reform of the asylum
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DO THIS,” said Bill Frelick, the refugee program manager for Human Rights Watch.

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Despite the long odds, any federal legislation that addresses the nation’s broken immigration system is worth fighting for, said Robyn Merrill, executive director of Maine Equal Justice Partners.

“We see this as an important piece to the solution,” Merrill said. “If an opportunity presented itself. It’s certainly possible people could come together. It doesn’t make sense to prevent them from working. I think there’s consensus around that.”

The Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce is expected to appear with King on Friday to support the effort.

The Maine AFL-CIO doesn’t have a position for or against a change in the work waiting period, spokeswoman Sarah Bigney said.

The asylum process has been a contentious issue in Maine since Gov. Paul LePage

eliminated asylum seekers and “undocumented

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DO THIS Portland last June. Until then, asylum seekers were

eligible to receive state General Assistance vouchers for rent and other basic needs until they received their federal work authorization documents, which takes at least six months because immigrants can’t begin the 150-day work authorization process until 30 days after they have filed for asylum.

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LePage’s move had a significant impact in Portland, where the policy change affected at least 779 immigrants. The city, in effect, has been left to decide whether to spend local taxpayers’ money on continued aid or cut the asylum seekers off from what might be their only means of support.

Last year, Portland spent roughly \$5 million on asylum seekers and did not receive a state reimbursement. This year, the city has established a one-time, \$2.6 million fund to continue some assistance, even while some hope that legal disputes at the state level lead to a resumption of state funding.

The current asylum process for immigrants

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DO THIS Both hands and political persecution leaves applicants in limbo.

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Portland's asylum seekers typically came to the United States with visitor visas, which are good for six months, or student visas, which last for varying amounts of time. They have one year to apply for asylum, which would allow them to stay in the U.S. if they show credible fear of violence or political persecution back home. Once they file for asylum, they are considered lawfully present and are protected from deportation until they receive a ruling.

The six-month wait for work authorization was adopted in 1996 as a way to ease the backlog of asylum cases and to address perceived abuses in which immigrants could file false asylum claims and work in the U.S. until their asylum was denied. Before the 1996 law, immigrants could work soon after filing their application.

CITIES SUFFER UNDER CURRENT RULES

Meanwhile, asylum seekers have been

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DEATHS the federal level and, in Maine, have been

declared ineligible for General Assistance at the state level.

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The combination of the waiting period for work permits and the lack of state and federal aid has put the burden of supporting applicants on cities such as Portland.

“Unfortunately, it’s a huge problem,” said Sue Roche, executive director of the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, which helps immigrants apply for asylum in Maine. “I don’t think I have met any clients who weren’t interested in working as soon as they can.”

A number of local asylum seekers have said they would rather work than rely on aid.

Suavis Furaha, of Burundi, has fought the governor’s efforts to cut people like her from the General Assistance rolls. Last month, she told Portland’s City Council that, shortly after getting her federal work permit, she landed two jobs and worked 60 hours a week. She said she was no longer receiving public assistance.

“General Assistance was very helpful for me

NEWS and laid the foundation for me to enter the
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DO THIS workforce and be a contributing member of the
community,” Furaha said.

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BETTER SYSTEMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Portland officials cannot provide information about how long asylum seekers receive assistance, compared with other groups, because they did not previously track immigration status. Until last year, assistance was provided solely on financial need.

Human Rights Watch says the United States is the only country among 44 developed nations with procedures that prohibit asylum seekers from both working and receiving governmental assistance.

The European Union provides public benefits for asylum seekers until they are authorized to work, and Canada allows asylum seekers who lawfully enter the country to work after an initial screening, according to a 2013 Human Rights Watch report, “At Least Let Them Work.”

Comprehensive federal immigration reform

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The Republican-controlled Senate passed the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act to reform both the refugee and asylum process. However, that bill didn't address the work authorization issue.

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King unsuccessfully tried to amend the legislation to allow asylum seekers to seek work authorization while filing for asylum. That didn't matter, however, since the bill died in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

Last November, President Obama issued an executive order instituting immigration reforms, but those actions sought to refocus immigration enforcement efforts on felons, not families, and didn't address asylum seekers. That order was subsequently put on hold by a federal judge.

Prospects for comprehensive immigration reform coming out of Congress have remained dim ever since.

“I don’t see anything happening through the

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being voted in,” said Frelick, of Human Rights Watch.

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Rep. Chellie Pingree said in a written statement Wednesday that Congress should address the work rules for asylum seekers.

“All you have to do is look around Portland and you can see how badly we need immigration reform,” the Democrat said. “We have hundreds of asylum seekers who have fled dangerous situations in their own countries, are here legally and are perfectly willing to work. But they end up in limbo – sometimes for far more than 180 days – and that puts them in a very difficult situation.”

SEN. COLLINS TACKLING ISSUE, TOO

Sen. Susan Collins believes the asylum procedure needs to be reformed to improve security and speed up the process.

“I have previously offered two amendments designed to lessen those flaws by giving asylum officers the tools they need to dismiss

frivolous claims, and to ensure that any

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DO THIS may wish to do us harm is reviewed during the application process,” the Republican said in an email. “These changes would not only enhance our security, but would also help speed up the review process to allow asylum seekers to obtain work authorizations more quickly.”

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Republican U.S. Rep. Bruce Poliquin’s office did not respond to a request for comment.

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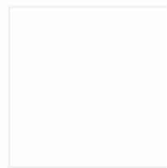
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1 Maine CDC reports record 346 new COVID-19 cases, 2 additional deaths

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Shirk, Georgette L

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 2:59 PM
To: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Cc: [redacted]; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers; [redacted]; #ZNK FDNS
Subject: RE: [redacted] Cases

(b)(7)(e)

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

Hi [redacted]

[redacted]

From: Isaacson, Mollie [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 12:54 PM
To: Kumar, Vikram [redacted]; Awadalla, Angie N [redacted]; Nauss, Jennifer L [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Cc: Ali, Sara A [redacted]; Sisco-Izak, Marta A [redacted]; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers [redacted]; Shaw, Katerina [redacted]
#ZNK FDNS [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Subject: RE: [redacted] Cases

(b)(7)(e)

Looping in the rest of the FDNS team for their awareness.

[redacted]

Thanks, [redacted] (b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 12:04 PM
To: [redacted]; [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]; [redacted]; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers [redacted]; [redacted]
Subject: RE: [redacted] Cases (b)(7)(e)

Hey [redacted]

(b)(7)(c) If it helps, [redacted] and I started a similar conversation several months ago. I can forward those to you as well.

☺ (b)(7)(c)

From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 11:53 AM (b)(7)(c)
To: [redacted]

(b)(7)(c)

Cc: [redacted]

[redacted]; #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers

[redacted] (b)(7)(c)

Subject: [redacted] Cases

(b)(7)(e)

Hi,

(b)(7)(e)

I just wanted to bring to your attention a similar fact pattern that I have encountered with [redacted] backlog cases. So far I have come across two cases [redacted] that are very interestingly similar.

[Large redacted area]

Anyone come across anything like that?

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

Best,

[redacted] (b)(7)(c)

Shirk, Georgette L

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Friday, January 09, 2015 2:36 PM
To: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Cc:
Subject: RE: DRAFT re: [redacted] & sharing info with DOS

(b)(7)(e)

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

Thanks, Leticia. As we discussed, [redacted]

[redacted] (b)(7)(c)

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Friday, January 09, 2015 11:34 AM
To: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Cc:
Subject: FW: DRAFT re: [redacted] & sharing info with DOS

(b)(7)(e)

Dear [redacted] (b)(7)(c)

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

[redacted] (b)(7)(c)

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2015 4:21 PM
To: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Subject: FW: DRAFT re: [redacted] & sharing info with DOS

(b)(7)(e)

FYI.

From: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2015 4:04 PM
To: [redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Cc:
Subject: RE: DRAFT re: [redacted] & sharing info with DOS

(b)(7)(e)

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

Hi [redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] anything to add?
[Redacted]

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

From: [Redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2015 3:15 PM
To: [Redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Subject: FW: DRAFT re: [Redacted] & sharing info with DOS

Hi [Redacted] (b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e) (b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

Below is an inquiry I received from a new FDNS officer. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

From: [Redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 10:06 AM
To: [Redacted] (b)(7)(c)
Subject: DRAFT re: [Redacted] & sharing info with DOS

[Redacted] (b)(7)(e) (b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

[Redacted]

Thanks,

(b)(7)(c) (b)(7)(e)

(b)(7)(c)

[Redacted]

FDNS Immigration Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall Street West 4th Floor
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

Phone: [Redacted] (b)(7)(c)

Please be advised that information related to an asylum claim, including the fact that a person applied for asylum, cannot be released to third parties without the written consent of the applicant except as provided in 8 CFR 208.6.

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Shirk, Georgette L

From: Shaw, Katerina
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 10:20 AM
To: Kumar, Vikram
Subject: RE: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi) - TRIG



From: Kumar, Vikram [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 11:14 AM
To: Shaw, Katerina [redacted]
Cc: Fouda, Lauren T [redacted]
Subject: FW: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi) - TRIG

Nice work Katerina. ☺

From: Kumar, Vikram
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 11:13 AM (b)(6)
To: #ZNK Asylum Officers [redacted]
Subject: FW: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi) - TRIG

Hi all,

See below for an FAQ regarding the TRIG implications of attending protests.

[redacted] (b)(7)(e)

Vikram Kumar
Senior Asylum Officer
U.S. Department of Homeland Security- Newark Asylum Office

From: Mathew, Ajai [redacted] (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 11:09 AM
To: Knowlton, Nicholas D [redacted]; Berman-vaporis, Rachel P [redacted]
[redacted]; Sullivan, Laura C [redacted]; Cleary, Heather M [redacted]
[redacted]; McMillan, Jill [redacted]; Clark, Dusty L [redacted]
[redacted]; McEvoy, Erin B [redacted]; Beck, LaToya S [redacted]
[redacted]; Trinh, Kimberly B [redacted]; Lynn, Mallory L [redacted]
[redacted]; Kim, Alejandra [redacted]; Dominguez, Maria R [redacted]
[redacted]; Talamantes, Eudelia A [redacted]; Coto, Yolanda R [redacted]
[redacted]; Baj, Ewa [redacted]; Dragan, Mariusz [redacted]
Fouda, Lauren T [redacted]; Kumar, Vikram [redacted]; Lewis, Victoria E [redacted]
[redacted]; Swen, Oluremi A (Remi) [redacted]; Sundborg, Rachael S [redacted]

(b)(6)

[redacted]; Krause, Paige M [redacted]; Vasquez, Arnoldo A
Romano Ferreira, Nicole I [redacted]; Damron,
Andrew T [redacted]; Totter, Stephen [redacted]; Satia, Kimberly I
[redacted]; Lehman, Danielle E [redacted]
Cc: Whalen, Ellen A [redacted]; Metzger, Evelyn S [redacted]; Picciotto,
Giacomo A [redacted]; Kirkland, Brooke A [redacted]
Subject: New FAQ on Attending Demonstrations & research paper on Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Burundi)

Hi TRIG POCs,

Just sending this email to notify you of a new FAQ on Attending Demonstrations, which posted to the TRIG ECN yesterday and discusses whether there are any TRIG implications relating to attending demonstration, shouting slogans at a demonstration, attending demonstrations organized by Tier III groups, attending demonstrations that turn violent, and providing support to demonstrators at a violent demonstration.

[RAIO TRIG FAQ on Attending Demonstrations](#)

[redacted] (b)(7)(e)

[Movement for Solidarity and Democracy](#)

Thank you,
Ajai

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Raufer, Susan
Sent: Monday, August 27, 2012 7:52 AM
To: 'Maile Ohara'
Subject: RE: request to share email address

Hi Maile!

Wow! California, huh? That is news! I am sorry you have left the area, but I am sure it will be wonderful for your family. I do hope things work out for you to be part of the professional staff we call on to help train new Asylum Officers. It comes up once or twice a year, and it is a really wonderful training – usually conducted outside of Washington. You should be hearing from a guy named Miguel Figueroa in DC.

And, I am going to hold out hope that we have not done our last Davis Polk panel!

Sue

From: Maile Ohara [mailto:] (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2012 2:10 PM
To: Raufer, Susan
Subject: Re: request to share email address

So nice to hear from you! I hope that you and your family are doing well. Of course, please feel free to share my contact information:

(b)(6)

The work you've been doing is incredibly interesting and I would be more than happy to participate in whatever way is helpful. The one caveat is that I have recently moved to California with my family. I am coming back to New York for several other trainings throughout the year and anticipate that I'll have one foot out East for the years to come. This is to say that flying out to D.C. would not be an issue at all for me.

On a personal note, it is absolutely beautiful out here in Laguna Beach and a (b)(6)

I've started to rebuild my private practice, but it is perfect timing to be able to spend more time at home.

If collaborating in D.C. does not work, I might just see you at Davis Polk since their trainings fall on the same week I teach at NYU and Montefiore hospitals.

Take care,
Maile

Maile O'Hara, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
961 South Pacific Coast High Way
Laguna Beach, Ca. 92651

[Redacted]

From: "Raufer, Susan" [Redacted]
To: [Redacted] (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, August 22, 2012 6:24 PM
Subject: request to share email address

Maile,

I hope you are well. I am assuming we will soon be called to be on our regular panel at Davis Polk some time soon. But in the meantime...

It happened that your name came up in a discussion I was having in Washington , DC yesterday with the people who are developing the training program for new Asylum Officers. You may have heard that Dr..Allan Keller has been involved in helping the Asylum Program do the day-long training that focuses on interviewing survivors of torture. OK, so I was the one who brought up your name as the coordinators of this program were looking for professionals to participate in the program in addition to Dr. Keller and some of the others who have done so over the years. I told them about your presentation at our office, and proposed that you would be an excellent person to ask.

My colleagues asked me to forward your contact information to them, and I realized that the only current contact information (at least I hope it is current) is this email address, which I believe is your personal one. I think you had given it to me when you were transitioning to your new job. In any case, I did not want to forward it to others without your permission. Or, perhaps, there is another email address that I could give them?

I am sure, if you provide the contact information, that they will approach you about doing these classes. They conduct the training two to three times a year, and ask different psychiatrists, medical doctors, and other professionals with experience in treating survivors of torture to work side by side with an asylum-program instructor to guide the officers through a practical exercise in interviewing survivors. I have participated a number of times as the asylum instructor. In any case, if you are interested, I would be happy to discuss it further with you. For now, please let me know if I should forward this or another email address to the coordinators.

Hope we will be collaborating soon, in one venue or another.

Sue Raufer

Susan Raufer
Director,
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall Street West,
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071

[Redacted] (b)(6)

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Dragan, Mariusz
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2018 3:49 PM
To: #ZNK Asylum Officers
Cc: #ZNK Supervisory Asylum Officers
Subject: Rwanda cases

Colleagues,

(b)(6)



Has anyone seen a similar claim recently?

Thanks for your input.

Mariusz Dragan
Supervisory Asylum Officer
Newark Asylum Office
1200 Wall Street
Lyndhurst, NJ 07071
Phone: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]

(b)(6)

Shirk, Georgette L

Subject: stakeholder meeting - Portland Maine (your pal, Sal!)

Start: Wed 10/8/2014 1:00 PM

End: Wed 10/8/2014 2:30 PM

Show Time As: Tentative

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Not yet responded

Organizer: Shirk, Georgette L

Just a bookmark, but as you no doubt know, you are always welcome to Maine.

Shirk, Georgette L

From: Benzan, Virginia
Sent: Monday, February 26, 2018 1:58 PM
To: #ZBO Everyone
Subject: Wednesday's Training: DRC and Angola

ZBO!

This Wednesday, Joseph Sebarenzi from RAIO Research will present on country conditions in the DRC and Angola. Training will start at 2:00pm. Joseph will also be available to discuss individual cases with you starting at 11:00am.

We will also have an office lunch to welcome Joseph and celebrate.

In preparation of our training, Joseph forwarded some useful video links.

The videos on the DRC is about armed groups in eastern DRC and about government forces persecuting citizens. The link on the DRC also has a text in which you will find another short video on the DRC.

The two videos on Angola are about recent elections that led to the replacement of president Edouard dos Santos with Joao Lourenco.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/06/north-kivu-civilians-bear-brunt-fresh-fighting-170620124859533.html>



North Kivu: Civilians bear the brunt of fresh fighting ...

www.aljazeera.com

Civilians have been forced to flee their homes, adding to the tens of thousands already living in IDP camps.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o79goOxusUg>



Angola vote marks new era as Dos Santos ends 38-year reign

www.youtube.com

Angolans vote in a general election on August 23 which is likely to sweep former defence minister Joao Lourenco into power. Lourenco is the chosen successor of ...



Angola's new president Joao Lourenco will be sworn in on Tuesday

www.youtube.com

Angola's incoming president Joao Lourenco is facing a slew of challenges that include dwindling oil prices, rampant poverty and soaring unemployment. The former ...

VIRGINIA BENZAN

Training Officer

Boston Sub-Office/Newark Asylum Office

USCIS/DHS

JFK Federal Building

15 New Sudbury Street, Suite 600

Boston, MA 02203



[Redacted]



(617) 565-9507

(b)(6)



[Redacted]



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North Kivu: Civilians bear the brunt of fresh fighting

Civilians have been forced to flee their homes, adding to the tens of thousands already living in IDP camps.

Video

More

By Catherine Wambua-Soi

21 Jun 2017



Goma, DRC – Ouimana Buiko Zawadi is desperate to get her story out. She sits with her four children and her brothers on the floor of a bare room in a camp for

displaced people in Goma city – the capital of North Kivu province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo ([DRC](#)).

At night they sleep on a tattered mat in a corner of one of the two rooms that they share with 40 other people who recently fled ongoing violence in Tongo, about 80km northwest of Goma.

They have escaped conflict between the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura rebels.

It is hard to interrupt her when she starts talking.

They started stealing from us, taxing us. If you refused to pay up they would kill you. They raped women

OUIMANA BUIKO ZAWADI, INTERNALLY DISPLACED

“We lived well back home, farmed and fed our children, then different rebel groups started fighting over our territory,” Ouimana says.

The eastern part of DRC is home to a number of armed groups, including FDLR, Nyatura and Mai Mai rebel groups.

“They started stealing from us, taxing us. If you refused to pay up they would kill you. They raped women,” the 35-year-old says.

“At night they would come and burn people’s houses. Even the forest where we would flee to was not safe. There were men with arms.”

She laments the lack of government security forces.

“So I decided to bring my children here. I think I’d rather they die of hunger than in the hands of a machete-wielding rebel,” she says.

Internally displaced people

Ouimana’s story reads like a horror novel. It is difficult to imagine the terror of a mother who only wants to save her children.

It took them a week by foot to get to Mugunga 3 camp for internally displaced people which about 4,000 others have called home, some for close to a decade.



DRC forces have launched offensive against rebels [Patrick Mugo Mugo/Al Jazeera]

DRC has about 3.7 million internally displaced people. More than 992,000 were displaced last year alone, according to a report by the Norwegian Refugee Coun-

cil's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. This is the highest number in the world of internally displaced people registered in 2016.

An additional 1.3 million Congolese have fled the most recent violence in Kasai Province at the border with [Angola](#). Most of them are seeking refuge in Angola.

The violence erupted last August after a rebellion by Kamuina Nsapu armed group, following which a military offensive was launched. More than 400 people have been killed, dozens of them beheaded – allegedly by the rebel fighters but security forces have also been accused by the [UN](#) of using excessive force against civilians.

At least 3,383 people have been killed in the fighting between DRC forces and militia members since last October, the country's Catholic church said on Tuesday in a report.

The UN had previously said hundreds died in the violence. The church report also said DRC's national army was responsible for destroying 10 villages, Reuters news agency reported.

The army's spokesman could not be immediately reached for comment.

Rafaella Pascarella from the [United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) told Al Jazeera that DRC is a “forgotten crisis” and aid agencies have struggled to put the plight of those in need on the world agenda. She says huge budget cuts by donors have made it extremely difficult to carry out aid work.

To add to the woes, the country also hosts more than 300,000 refugees from the neighbouring [Central African Republic](#), South Sudan, Burundi and [Rwanda](#).

Armed conflict

Twenty-three years of armed conflict and inter-communal violence has taken a toll on this mineral-rich nation. People have been displaced by clashes, sometimes between the military and armed groups or between the rebels themselves.

The government has for years struggled to rid the country of the numerous armed groups, with more than 40 of them operating in North Kivu alone.

In 2013, the Congolese military (FARDC) and UN force (MONUSCO) defeated the largest armed group in the region, called M23. But other armed groups continue to operate as the military failed to act against them.

The government forces in 2014 launched an operation, Sokola 1, in South Kivu's Beni region to push out fighters belonging to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), who originated in neighbouring Uganda.

Within a year, the military claimed it had destroyed the rebel headquarters in Beni and pushed the few remaining fighters deep into the Virunga Park – away from Beni.

But soon after fighters believed to be members of ADF carried out a series of killings in Beni. Villages were attacked and more than 700 people have been killed since the end of the military operation. Last year, Sokola 1 was launched again and is still going on.

In 2015, another offensive was launched against the FDLR in North Kivu, whose presence in Congo dates back nearly 20 years.

Military operation

The ongoing military operation has significantly weakened the armed group, which is wanted by neighbouring Rwanda. Reports indicate that only a few thou-

sand remain and pose little threat to either Rwanda or DRC. But, their presence, no matter how small, does not sit comfortably with either country.

Thousands of former rebels have been disarmed and rehabilitated as part of a UN and Congolese government amnesty programme, but many more are still in the jungle.

In May this year, the government launched Sokola 2, an offensive to push out armed groups who have divided territories inside the Virunga National Park, and are said to be trading in charcoal and wildlife.

Colonel Bazil Kanuma from the DRC military, who is leading the operation, said his troops will stay in Nyamilima – the military headquarters of the operation – until the job is done.

“I ask the people we are pursuing and who are Congolese, to surrender and get help. If they don’t, then they will feel our wrath,” he said.

The first target is Mai-Mai, a Congolese armed group and the government’s biggest threat today. Mai-Mai was formed to protect their communities against rival armed groups – largely because there’s little government presence in many of the remote areas.

The group has since splintered into many factions. That’s what makes it dangerous and difficult to defeat. The fighters can also easily move around villages; they know the forest well and are mostly protected by communities.

The government has urged people to stop shielding rebels but the country’s leadership is so far removed from many who live in hard-to-access villages that trust is an issue.

People Al Jazeera spoke to in the villages said that to end the cycle of violence in DRC the government needs to build a relationship with the people based on trust.



Rape survivors hope for justice in DRC

They further say that for the rebel groups to be eliminated, there cannot be a leadership and security vacuum that creates an atmosphere for them to thrive.

As long as the war against rebels continues to victimise civilians, all that's being done is an exercise in futility, villagers said.

Some of the groups are said to be funded by influential individuals both in Congo and outside the country, sources told Al Jazeera.

The military is ill-equipped and soldiers poorly paid. Ethnic divisions and politics make the job even harder. A failure to address underlying causes of the con-

flict only adds to the cyclical nature of one of the world's most complicated conflicts.

Ouimana is not hopeful that her home will be safe enough for her to return any time soon. She looks at her children and wonders about their future.

In the Mugunga camp, she joins people who have lived in dilapidated tents for nine years ... and prays that she is not forced to stay here for years to come.

SOURCE : AL JAZEERA

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