



# CCAI Delegation to Guatemala

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*February 4-6, 2004*

**Delegation Members:** Congressman Dave Camp (R-MI) and Congressman William Delahunt (D-MA), Paul Singer (CCAI Board), Valdur Koha (CCAI Board), Kerry Hasenbalg, (CCAI Executive Director).

## **Goals and Objectives:**

- Strengthen relations with Guatemalan officials who oversee adoption and the care of children in need of homes.
- Demonstrate that the US government is a strong advocate of adoption for children who cannot remain in the care of their biological family.
- Obtain a thorough understanding of the new requirements for inter-country adoption.
- To ensure that inter-country adoptions are not suspended and that even in the midst of considerable change, legal adoptions are able to be processed and finalized in a timely manner.

## **Overview:**

The delegation met with high-ranking members of the Guatemalan government including Oscar Berger, the recently elected President of Guatemala, Members of the Guatemalan Congress and senior officials at the Foreign Ministry and central authority for Guatemalan adoptions, *la Procuraduría General de la Nación* (PGN). In addition, the delegation met extensively with John Hamilton, the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, senior officials from the State Department and the Citizenship & Immigration Services and other US embassy officials to discuss efforts to improve processing requirements and, therefore, reduce delays faced by prospective adoptive parents from the US.



While the trip was brief, there was still time to pay a visit to Hogar Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Zone 1. Members of the delegation had the chance to learn more about the children living there and spend time playing.

### **Outcomes:**

As a result of this visit, the delegation will continue to work with US and Guatemalan government officials to address the concerns and anxieties expressed by US citizens facing extraordinary and anxiety-ridden delays during the adoption process. Specifically, the delegation requested that the US government take immediate steps to provide direct and timely notification to prospective adoptive parents following adjudication of casework under their control, such as the notice of pre-approval. The delegation further requested that the US government better explain its role and responsibilities in the process. In addition, the Coalition will continue an ongoing dialogue with the PGN in an effort to support clear, transparent procedures for international adoptions.

As a result of the delegation's meetings in Guatemala, CCAI received commitments from both governments to receive notification of any and all legal or systemic changes that affect inter-country adoption, and to establish direct lines of communication for prospective adoptive families on the status of any pending cases. Working together to ensure that the best interests of the children remain the top priority, both parties remain committed to a bilateral effort to ensure that any pending cases will be processed in the most expeditious manner possible while taking care to protect all parties from any abuses in the process.