



Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly

53 West Jackson Blvd., Suite 1301 - Chicago, Illinois 60604-3552
Tel.: 312/ 461-0812 - Fax: 312/ 461-1466 - e-mail: clese@ameritech.net

March 30, 2007

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SABINA PELLO
AMERICANS BY VALUES

AWILDA GONZALEZ
ASI

JING ZHANG
ASIAN HUMAN SERVICES

SHOSHAN SARKIS
ASSYRIAN NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF ILLINOIS

KOMPHA SETH
CAMBODIAN ASSOCIATION
OF ILLINOIS

ILEANA GÓMEZ
CASA CENTRAL

SUEYLEE CHANG
CHINESE AMERICAN
SERVICE LEAGUE

IRINA POLISHCHUK
COUNCIL FOR
JEWISH ELDERLY

YMAN VIEN
ETHNIC CHINESE
COMMUNITY

REGINA SVINKUN
EUROPEAN AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION

OLEG MALSKIY
INTERFAITH REFUGEE &
IMMIGRATION MINISTRIES

HELEN NAKAYAMA
JAPANESE AMERICAN
SERVICE COMMITTEE

PAUL YUN
KOREAN AMERICAN
SENIOR CENTER

SANTOSH KUMAR
METROPOLITAN ASIAN
FAMILY SERVICES

MARTA PEREYRA
POLISH AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION

SAN O
SOUTH-EAST ASIA
CENTER

ANGEL KIMDO
URHAI COMMUNITY
SERVICE CENTER

ELIZABETH CAGAN
WHITE CRANE
WELLNESS CENTER

LILIANA POPOVIC
WORLD RELIEF/DU PAGE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ELISABETH O'GRADY

Director, Regulatory Management Division
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 3rd floor
Washington DC 20529

Dear Sir or Madame,

I strongly urge you to reconsider USCIS' proposed fee increases because these increases will be detrimental to low income immigrant families and will place an extreme hardship on elderly immigrants, refugees, and asylees. The proposed fee changes will increase the fee for Naturalization from \$330 to \$595 (not counting \$80 for biometrics), for renewal or replacement of a Permanent Resident card from \$190 to \$290, and the application filing fee for permanent residency from \$325 to \$905. These are impossible amounts for low income families and especially for elderly applicants, who have few prospects for employment or income generation.

As one Bosnian asylee stated, "I came here with my ten fingers and empty pockets." His story is illustrative:

"I came here because I would have been forced by the police to be commander of a concentration camp. I was given 24 hours to leave my country. I had a nice job at a very high level in the military. I had two houses and a very comfortable life. When I came here, I was like a homeless person. I started here in my 60's with a job cleaning toilets. I felt so bad. I started to work immediately because I didn't want any help. I wanted to show how I can work and survive. I rejected charity. For ten years, I worked 365 days, no weekends or holidays, to earn my pension. Then the company told me that because I am not a citizen, my pension is just \$350/month. I got a green card just last year when I am 75. Now I have to wait four years to become a citizen."

We ask that you take the following measures:

- Ask Congress to appropriate funds to USCIS so that the fee structure can be set within the means of immigrants, refugees, and asylees. USCIS' role in maintaining national security is vital and worthy of taxpayer support.
- Include asylees among those who will pay no fee when filing Form I-485, the application for permanent resident status. As proposed, USCIS' fee increases exempt refugees, but not asylees.
- Allow elderly immigrants, refugees, and asylees to take the naturalization test in their first language regardless of how long they have resided in the United States.

On behalf of our clients, I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration,

Elisabeth O'Grady (EOG)

Elisabeth O'Grady
Executive Director