

February 1, 2007

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

REF: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2006-0044

Dear Director:

I would like to express my opposition to the proposed immigration benefit application fee increases.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Service has become a fee based agency and as such must review its current fees to balance out the cost of processing and adjudicating immigration related forms. Additionally, Director Emilio Gonzalez has the safety and integrity of our immigration system at heart when determining the need for a fee increase to ensure quality service to applicants while at the same time ensuring that the security of the system is not breached.

However, in reviewing the proposed increases, I have found that certain increases will be an incredible burden to many applicants who, as law abiding members of our community, are trying to earn a living and feed their families. For example, the fee increase proposed for the I-765 employment authorization card seems excessive. The current fee is \$180 and if the proposed increase is implemented, the fee would be \$340. This fee is almost doubled, yet this would affect the most needy members of our nation whose only interest is to work legally in the United States. Also, the I-485 application to become a permanent resident is currently \$325 and will be more than triple that amount at \$905 per person (plus \$80 for fingerprints), if the fee increase is implemented. Young families seeking to establish residence in our great nation will be faced with thousands of dollars in costs in order to have the privilege of working and adjusting their status.

Many elderly immigrants in our community are anxious to become US citizens. Many live on fixed incomes and would also be unable to apply for US citizenship as the cost would

increase to well over \$500. Becoming a citizen of the United States is a priceless honor, however, this increase would make citizenship unattainable to many U.S. permanent residents.

Although I am aware that USCIS offers a fee waiver for many applications, it has been my experience that fee waivers are seldom granted. Additionally, there are no guidelines for fee waiver applications, making it difficult for applicants to ascertain their eligibility prior to submitting a fee waiver that can take months to adjudicate.

Undeniably, we all want a better and more productive client oriented Service, but we should also take into account the impact that these large increases will have on the members of our community who most need and use these services. Increases in fees should go hand in hand with better service and shorter wait times for processing of immigration forms

I encourage the Director to review these proposed increases and reconsider the excessive increases to such applications.

Sincerely,

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress