
From: Donghui Li [mailto:donghui.li@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 01, 2007 3:40 PM
To: OSComments
Subject: DHS Docket No. USCIS-006-0044

DHS Docket No. USCIS-006-0044

I strongly oppose the proposal by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to increase immigration filing fees by an average of 66%. Tens of thousands of people have been suffering from the poor service offered by the USCIS, including years of waiting and separation from family members. This increase would create a barrier for some immigrants and serve as a new tax on applicants seeking to immigrate or to become citizens.

USCIS may well be the only government agency other than the Postal Service that tries to operate 99% on user fees. These fees are expected to pay not just for the services delivered to the applicant, but for the agency's overhead and for law enforcement activities such as investigations and security checks. It is well past time that the Administration requested, and the Congress appropriated, funds to allow this agency to properly do its job. Funding an entire agency on the backs of immigrants and their U.S. citizen spouses is beyond the pale.

I am deeply concerned that the public will not get significantly improved services to go with the significantly increased fees. USCIS Director Gonzalez has stated a goal for the agency of a 20% improvement in processing times by the end of 2009. A 66% increase in fees now for at best a 20% improvement in service three years from now is simply not acceptable.

Over the past 12 years we already have seen a fourfold increase in the cost of applying for citizenship. This proposed hike would result in a more than sevenfold increase. In 1994 the cost was only \$95, now the total fees are \$400, and under this proposal they will become \$675. I am unconvinced that the money from new increases will be put toward improving the antiquated systems that have caused years-long delays in the path to citizenship.

Raising the cost of immigration applications is not a viable solution. It is time for the Administration and Congress to step up and fund the government's fair share of the process.

Donghui Li
Stanford, CA