

JAMES R. LANGEVIN
2D DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
EMERGING THREATS, CYBERSECURITY, AND
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
CHAIRMAN

BORDER, MARITIME, AND
GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM

INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING, AND
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT

HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT
COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
TERRORISM, HUMAN INTELLIGENCE,
ANALYSIS AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE
TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3902

April 2, 2007

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
109 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-2735
FAX: (202) 225-5976

DISTRICT OFFICE:
THE SUMMIT SOUTH
300 CENTERVILLE ROAD, SUITE 200
WARWICK, RI 02886
TELEPHONE: (401) 732-9400
FAX: (401) 737-2982

james.langevin@mail.house.gov
www.house.gov/langevin

Director Emilio Gonzalez
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Director Gonzalez:

I respectfully write regarding the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services' proposed rule to increase immigration fees (72FR USCIS 2006-0044-0001). While I understand there is a significant backlog of applications, I am concerned that the proposed fee increase will place a greater financial burden on immigrants trying to become citizens of the United States.

Our country was founded by immigrants, and immigrants from around the world continue to make our nation rich with culture, heritage and tradition. The process through which they apply for citizenship should be both fair and expeditious. To achieve this goal, we must reduce the excessive backlogs and delays that immigrants continue to face. However, we should not do so in a way that makes achieving legal status simply unaffordable for many immigrant families.

On average, the proposed fee increase would raise application fees by 96 percent. Rather than spreading this increase out over a period of time, it would go into effect all at once, placing a significant financial strain on applicants. The fee for naturalization applications alone would rise by 80 percent, while other application packages, such as the adjustment of status package, the petition to sponsor relatives, and the fiancé petition, would also be increased. Each of these increases could present a hardship for members of immigrant communities, which could place our already fragile immigration system under even greater strain.

I am also concerned that by increasing application fees, CIS will send the wrong message to those attempting to comply with the legal process in good faith. By making compliance more difficult for struggling families to afford, we risk discouraging legal immigration while driving people to find alternative ways to come to the United States illegally. In its report, the 9/11 Commission stated that the services provided by U.S. immigration officials are a crucial element to our national security. It is vital to our homeland security efforts to keep detailed records on who is crossing our borders. Therefore, we must do everything possible to encourage adherence to our immigration laws, and to this end, the affordability of application fees must be maintained.

I fully support efforts made by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services to reduce excessive backlogs application delays. In doing so, however, it is critical that the agency preserve the affordability of following proper immigration procedures. I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on this proposed rule, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James R. Langevin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "J" and "L".

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress