

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
37th DISTRICT
SHARON TOMIKO SANTOS
HOUSE MAJORITY WHIP

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



EDUCATION
FINANCE
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
& INSURANCE

April 2, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Sloan:

I am writing to share my concerns about the proposed citizenship fee increase published in DHS Docket #USCIS – 2006-0044, Proposed Rule – Adjustment of the Immigration and Naturalization Benefit Application and Petition Fee Schedule.

I represent the 37th Legislative District in Seattle, Washington. My district is very diverse, with the largest population of refugees and immigrants in the state. I am deeply concerned about the proposal to raise naturalization fees from \$400 to \$675, a steep increase of 69%. I am also concerned about the additional proposals to raise fees on other immigration and naturalization petitions.

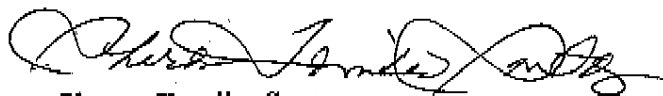
Many of the immigrant and refugee constituents of my district are low-income and working class people who work hard, often at 2 or 3 jobs, to support their families. The proposed fee increases will significantly impact their livelihood, especially for those who fled persecution in their native country and received refuge or asylum here. For example, a family of four who have been granted asylum will be required to pay \$3,620 in application fees for permanent residence. Few immigrant and refugee families will be able to afford an expense of this amount. Even more disturbing, the proposed rule eliminates fee waivers for adjustments to the immigration status of asylees which removes the discretionary authority of federal agency officials to make allowances for those applicants who are destitute.

Many of immigrant and refugee constituents of my district are elderly or disabled, and they already struggle to pass the citizenship test. These proposed fee increases will present yet another obstacle to citizenship. Most of these elders live on fixed incomes and can not easily secure additional resources to pay increased fees.

In sum, the proposal to raise fees for immigration and naturalization petitions is too expensive and too excessive in scope. The proposed rule, if adopted, will interfere with the ability of immigrant and refugees to enjoy family reunification, gainful employment, or full participation in our county's political process. This outcome is, I believe, diametrically contrary to our express hope for these newest Americans. I strongly urge you to reconsider these proposed fee increases.

Thank you for your attention to my comments on behalf of the many residents of Washington state who seek to gain full citizenship in this great nation.

Sincerely,



Sharon Tomiko Santos
State Representative, 37th Legislative District
House Majority Whip