



កម្ពុជា

**Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
of Greater Lowell, Inc.**

165 Jackson Street, Lowell, Massachusetts 01852
Tel: (978) 596-1000 Fax: (978) 454-1806

February 8, 2007

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

Dear Director:

I am most concerned about a proposal by the Citizenship and Immigration Service, the division of the Department of Homeland Security, to nearly double the cost of becoming an U.S. citizen and drastically raise the cost of becoming a legal permanent resident. According to the articles by the Associate Press issued on January 31, 2007, the bill proposes to increase an application fee for citizenship from \$330 to \$595 and the fee for becoming a legal permanent resident from \$325 to \$905.

The proposal, if adopted, would affect the poor Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants especially Cambodians in the United States. It would prevent several hundred thousands of Cambodians who have already taken or will take steps toward becoming US citizen or permanent residents from becoming one.

Lowell, MA would be disproportionately affected since it is home to the second-largest community of Cambodian refugees in the United States. According to the 2000 U.S Census, the Southeast Asian population of Lowell totals 17,300. It is believed that the total Lowell's Southeast Asian population is seriously undercounted. The Lowell City officials estimate the Southeast Asian population to be at least 32,000 most of who are Cambodians. According to recent census data, the per capita income for the Lowell's Cambodians is US\$ 6,259; 42.6 % of the Lowell's Cambodians live below the Federal Poverty Level; and only 46% of Lowell's Cambodians are in the workforce, in contrast to the national average of 65%.

I hope you will seriously consider the impact that the proposal would have on our poor Southeast Asians who would seek to become American citizen or permanent residents. Such the proposal can only prevent smooth integration of minority communities into a mainstream society, and seems to be contrary to an immigration policy that President Bush well articulated in his state of the Union Address to the United States Congress on Tuesday January 23, 2007.

Sincerely,

Vong Ros
Executive Director