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Ann Opara
22 Moss Ave #201
Oakland, CA 94610

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Department of Homeland Security
US Citizenship & Immigration Services

Response to:
Docket # USCIS 2006-0044
Via Facsimile 866-466-5370

Mr. Chertoff,

I am writing to express my concerns after reviewing the proposed rule regarding the adjustment of immigration and naturalization benefit application and petition fee schedule.

The introductory summary states "this rule proposes to increase the immigration and naturalization benefit applications and petition fee schedule by weighted as of \$174." However, the increases for oft-used forms are significantly more and immediate. I specifically note, the I-129F with a \$285 (168%) increase and the I-485 with a \$580 (178%) increase. I wonder whether these increases are indirectly an attempt to discourage immigration to the US?

Within the detailed explanation, much of the fee increase is attributable to increased homeland security. However, as it should, much of the protection of our borders occurs at the overseas consulates. Those are staffed and managed by the Bureau of Consular Affairs arm of the State Department. The presidential mandate of FY 2002 has pushed more work to the consulates. No new funding is proposed for the consulates.

I bring to your attention the Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic consulate which has an 18 - 24 month backlog for fiance and spouse visas. These are visas are supposedly issued without a quota, however citizens applying for their fiances/spouses are in a line of 28000 people, including non-citizens (permanent residents) applying for their family members.

One of the reasons given for the increase in I-485 fees is due to the consolidation of I-485 pieces. Nonetheless, advanced (travel) parole is an optional need. Also, employment authorization is consolidated. Further, based on recent conversations with others, employment authorizations are not currently processed in a timely manner to be useful to applicants.

Another reason given for the "...fee increase is due to threefold increase in completion rates ..." It is not reasonable that because more people are applying for an adjustment of status is a reason to increase the fees by 178%. Increased applicants already result in increased fee collections.

I request that you reconsider the need to significantly increase these fees at ~~one~~ time. Another idea would be to phase in these increases over a few years.

Regards,



CC. Representative Barbara Lee

202-226-1104