
From: schroeder@Colbertartists.com [mailto:schroeder@Colbertartists.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 22, 2007 5:33 PM
To: OSComments
Subject: DHS No. USCIS-2006-0044

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

Dear Director U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,

On behalf of Colbert Artists Management, Inc. and the audiences we serve, I submit these comments in response to the proposed rule published in 72 Fed. Reg. 4888-4915 (February 1, 2007) to adjust the immigration and naturalization benefit application and petition fee schedule.

I am opposed to the proposed increase of the filing fees for nonimmigrant worker petitions. The proposed increase in the Form I-129 and Form I-824 filing fees will be financially burdensome to the musicians we represent and the nonprofit performing arts organizations who hire them. Before the USCIS contemplates any price increase, regular processing procedures must be improved.

USCIS should not consider a fee increase without first improving regular processing procedures in the following ways:

Reduce the maximum processing period for O and P petitions to 30 days. Receipt notices from USCIS often indicate that processing periods will range anywhere between 30 and 120 days. This time span is simply too ambiguous and lengthy to accommodate booking and presenting foreign guest artists for performances with a fixed date. To engage foreign guest artists, and more freely facilitate international cultural exchange, the nonprofit performing arts community must be able to rely upon a 30-day maximum processing period.

Improve the reliability and consistency in adjudication of O and P petitions. Current USCIS policies and practices result in inefficient processing of O and P visas - causing delay, expense, and unwarranted requests for further evidence. USCIS must implement uniform policies, procedures, and training for efficient processing of petitions.

Improve the quality of customer service. From personal experience, the customer service representatives of the USCIS have proven to be unhelpful, uninformed, and rude in many cases. It is unfortunate to have a customer service department if it

only increases the stress and confusion of the visa application process.

Implement uniform policies to improve the traditional expedite service. The USCIS has made traditional expedite processing available at no additional fee to petitioners who experience an unforeseen emergency. Since implementing the Premium Process Service, the USCIS has allowed nonprofit organizations to remain eligible for the traditional expedite. However, the standards for granting expedited processing requests are unclear. The traditional expedite is not helpful unless there are clear, uniform policies appropriately followed and administered by USCIS.

I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on this proposed fee increase. We oppose the proposed fee increase and urge the USCIS to demonstrably improve processing of regular petitions before burdening petitioners with any increase in processing fees.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Schroeder
President
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New York, NY 10019

cc:
Senator Charles Schumer
Representative Carolyn Maloney
Senator Hillary Clinton