

**From:** KarenHilgeman@aol.com [mailto:KarenHilgeman@aol.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 02, 2007 12:05 AM  
**To:** OSComments  
**Subject:** USCIS-2006-0044

To the Department of Homeland Security,

I'm writing to protest the proposed fee increases for immigrants. It seems to me that such a huge increase in fees punish immigrants who follow the rules and who want become a permanent part of the United States.

An increase of 66% is extremely prohibitive for many people. I, personally, am saving my money for a down payment for a house. If suddenly I had to save 66% more than the amount I'm planning on, I would most likely have to give up my dream to own a home. I fear that such large fee increases will make this e the case for many immigrants, as well.

I know that the argument has been made that people have still applied for green cards and citizenship after other fee increases in the past. But that doesn't mean that it's the same people who would have applied had the fees stayed the same. Sure, if the fees go up, people will still apply. But for some immigrants, this fee increase will forever cut off their dreams of becoming U.S. citizens. I teach many immigrants, and most don't have money to spare. They work very hard and for very long hours and very low wages. And many families are trying to afford citizenship for several family members at the same time. The proposed costs are very prohibitive for them.

I feel that DHS should either ask Congress for a yearly allotment of funds for the department to do its job in a way that doesn't put such an unfair burden on immigrants.

I also think that if an increase does have to happen, it should occur in stages, not all at once. If an increase were added in stages, or if an increase were announced for a year or two in the future, then permanent residents could have time to study for the citizenship exam and pass it before the fees increased. But many people are not in a position to file for citizenship in the next few months before fees go up because they need more time to work on their English and prepare for the test.

In addition to punishing people becoming citizens, people who want to become Lawful Permanent Residents are truly being hurt by the upfront fees of \$905. Many middle-class natural born citizens could not come up with that kind of money, and certainly many immigrants cannot.

In conclusion, I hope that the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services do whatever they can to get funding from other sources and either reject the proposed fee increases or severely limit them to perhaps a 10 or 15% increase -- not 66%!

Sincerely,

Karen Hilgeman  
Mt. Prospect, Illinois

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