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From: mail.relay@mailmanager.net [<mailto:mail.relay@mailmanager.net>] On
Behalf Of Evelyn Koine
Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2007 2:44 PM
To: USCIS Comments
Subject: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2006-0044 - USCIS Fee Increase Comment

Evelyn Koine
Office of International Admission, SIUC
Carbondale, IL 62901-4333

March 1, 2007

USCIS Comments

Dear USCIS Comments:

I am writing to you as an international educator in opposition to the February 1, 2007, proposed rule Adjustment of the Immigration and Naturalization Benefit Application and Petition Fee Schedule.

The proposed fee increases are so exorbitant they will act as a disincentive for international students and scholars to study and work in the United States. USCIS must reconsider the role of appropriated funds

to meet the administrative needs of the agency. I ask that fees be reduced to the actual cost of processing the application or petition.

International students and scholars, and campus officials that employ them, file tens of thousands of petitions and applications with USCIS annually, including:

The near-doubling of the I-765 fee for international students in F status to apply for work authorization for Optional Practical Training, from \$180 to \$340.

The increases in the fees required in connection with change of status from F to H-1B, including the increase from \$200 to \$300 (a 50 percent increase) in the I-539 application to change non-immigrant status, and the increase from \$190 to \$320 (a 68 percent increase) in the I-129 petition

for non-immigrant worker. These fees are on top of the required data collection and fraud prevention fee, which is not part of the fee schedule.

Though International Student enrollment may slowly be increasing across the US, this undergraduate population has been in steady decline at Southern Illinois University Carbondale for the last five years. The majority of our undergraduate are self supporting. I am constantly getting request for scholarships that we do not have available. As these increases may only apply to currently enrolled students, they will have an impact on new students choosing The U.S instead of The U.K., Canada, or Australia.

Apart from the direct impact of the excessive fees, they are contrary to

clearly expressed U.S. policies. The President, the Secretary of State,

and indeed the Secretary of Homeland Security have expressed clearly and

often the high value that the United States places on attracting international students and scholars to this country. The United States reaps immeasurable benefits for our foreign policy, our students education and shared culture, our economy, our competitiveness, and our public diplomacy from attracting the best and brightest minds and the next generation of world leaders to America's educational institutions.

While I understand that USCIS is permitted by law to recover the full cost of its services through fees, and indeed has no other option so long as Congress is unwilling to appropriate funds for the operation of the agency, I ask that the fees be reduced to the actual cost of processing the application or petition. Meanwhile, I ask Congress to step up to its responsibility for fixing the untenable situation that drives these fee increases.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Koine
618-453-2979

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