



American Friends Service Committee

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February 20, 2007

Dr. Emilio T. Gonzalez
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Dr. Gonzalez:

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace and humanitarian service. Grounded in the Quaker belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every person, AFSC works with immigrant communities in eighteen communities in fourteen states. AFSC's long and direct experience with community residents, local leaders, and grassroots organizations across the nation leads me to write to you concerning proposed fee increases by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

I wish to express our strong opposition to the proposed increases. Our analysis and experience tell us that the recently proposed increases are excessive and will create yet another obstacle for individuals seeking to adjust their immigration status.

The proposed fee increases will place too heavy a burden on the backs of immigrants, many of whom cannot shoulder the excessive costs and will be forced to postpone their dreams of becoming American citizens or to remain separated from their families. The size of the proposed fee increases is particularly troubling at a time when the administration has indicated that it wants to help immigrants become citizens of the United States.

We urge USCIS to work with members of Congress to create an alternative and permanent funding stream that will support USCIS operations. At the same time, AFSC will continue to urge Congressional leaders to fund immigration services and policies that benefit families rather than spending millions of dollars to underwrite policies centered on arrests, detention, and deportation, which cause untold family and community hardship.

The administration has made the democratic inclusion of immigrants one of its most prominent public messages. Dropping the proposed fee increases would add credibility to these public statements and also support immigrants in their efforts to contribute to the nation's vibrancy and future.

The economic wall raised by the proposed fee structure will diminish many people's hope to become permanent residents or citizens or to be reunited with their family members. Our field staff are already hearing concerns about the detrimental impact that higher fees will have for low-income and working class individuals and families.

We urge USCIS to adopt measures that do not restrict the opportunity of many families to become equal participants and contributors to the nation's social, cultural, political and economic future and to "do right" by removing restrictive and detrimental fee increases that will deny many immigrants the opportunity to work for and contribute to the nation's betterment.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. We look forward to your taking leadership on this critical matter.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ellen McNish".

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary

Cc: Patrick Leahy, (D-VT) Chair, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

Edward Kennedy, (D-MA) Chair, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Sub-Committee
on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship

John Conyers, (D-MI) Chair, U.S. House Judiciary Committee

Zoe Lofgren, (D-CA) Chair, U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration,
Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law