



# Coalition of Limited English Speaking Elderly

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ELISABETH O'GRADY

Director, Regulatory Management Division  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Department of Homeland Security  
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Washington DC 20529

Dear Sir or Madame,

I strongly urge you to reconsider USCIS' proposed fee increases because these increases will be detrimental to low income immigrant families and will place an extreme hardship on elderly immigrants, refugees, and asylees. The proposed fee changes will increase the fee for Naturalization from \$330 to \$595 (not counting \$80 for biometrics), for renewal or replacement of a Permanent Resident card from \$190 to \$290, and the application filing fee for permanent residency from \$325 to \$905. These are impossible amounts for low income families and especially for elderly applicants, who have few prospects for employment or income generation.

As one Bosnian asylee stated, "I came here with my ten fingers and empty pockets." His story is illustrative:

"I came here because I would have been forced by the police to be commander of a concentration camp. I was given 24 hours to leave my country. I had a nice job at a very high level in the military. I had two houses and a very comfortable life. When I came here, I was like a homeless person. I started here in my 60's with a job cleaning toilets. I felt so bad. I started to work immediately because I didn't want any help. I wanted to show how I can work and survive. I rejected charity. For ten years, I worked 365 days, no weekends or holidays, to earn my pension. Then the company told me that because I am not a citizen, my pension is just \$350/month. I got a green card just last year when I am 75. Now I have to wait four years to become a citizen."

We ask that you take the following measures:

- Ask Congress to appropriate funds to USCIS so that the fee structure can be set within the means of immigrants, refugees, and asylees. USCIS' role in maintaining national security is vital and worthy of taxpayer support.
- Include asylees among those who will pay no fee when filing Form I-485, the application for permanent resident status. As proposed, USCIS' fee increases exempt refugees, but not asylees.
- Allow elderly immigrants, refugees, and asylees to take the naturalization test in their first language regardless of how long they have resided in the United States.

On behalf of our clients, I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration,

*Elisabeth O'Grady (EO)*

Elisabeth O'Grady  
Executive Director

Dear Director of Regulatory Management Division:

We, the undersigned, strongly oppose the increased fee schedule proposed by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on February 1, 2007. The fee increases are alarming and detrimental to low income immigrant families, e.g., an increase from \$330 to \$595 (not counting \$80 for biometrics) for Naturalization, \$190 to \$290 for Renew/Replace Permanent Resident Card, \$190 to \$355 for Petition for Alien Relative, and \$325 to \$905 for Adjustment of Status to Permanent Resident.

USCIS claims that they need the fee increases to cover costs. However, we firmly believe that there are many ways to cover costs of USCIS operations. Contracting with not-for-profit community-based organizations to process applications through an open bidding process would solve the issue of a high cost operation. Elimination of unnecessary applications and bureaucracy would be cost effective. Perhaps there is a need to review all of the application forms to see whether they are necessary. For example, is it a *must* to renew permanent resident cards? Could USCIS issue citizenship certificates to children at the time when their parent is naturalized without having to apply for a certificate (N-600)?

We request that you reconsider such a drastic increase of immigration fees.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Sincerely yours,

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