

Dr. Emilio Gonzalez
Director, US Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington DC 20536

Director, Regulatory Management Division
US Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 3rd floor
Washington DC 20529

OSComments@dhs.gov

Dear Dr. Gonzalez:

As a Social Worker and a Refugee / Immigrant advocate, I am writing to oppose the proposed increase of the naturalization fee as well as other immigration fees (DHS Docket # USCIS-2006-0044) which will prevent many legal immigrants from achieving the American Dream of U.S. citizenship.

I understand that N400 application fee could increase in 2007 to as much as \$800, double the current total cost of \$400. Even more startling is the proposed cost of filing for adjustment of status (getting a green card), which for many immigrants is the first step on the road leading to US citizenship. The cost to apply for a green card (including fingerprinting fees) has risen from \$130 in 1998 to \$400 today. Under the proposed rule, the price will rise to \$985. In other words, it will cost nearly \$1,000 for an immigrant to get a green card and start the countdown to citizenship. A minimum-wage immigrant worker would need to save a full month's pay to afford the proposed fee. These fee increases will make citizenship unattainable for many lower-income, less-educated immigrants--immigrants who can currently become citizens and who make outstanding Americans.

You have publicly stated your position that U.S. citizenship is "priceless," and that immigrants would be willing to pay whatever the cost. But our experience is that many low-income immigrants, particularly immigrant families with multiple members who are eligible to naturalize, already have great difficulty paying for their applications, and already put off applying until they can afford the cost. The majority of our clients in King County are low-income and, when it comes to naturalization, already rely on services like the fee waiver in order to become citizens. A further major increase will only further put citizenship out of reach for thousands of immigrants who would love to become Americans.

Our government should welcome these hardworking, patriotic immigrants who want to be part of our nation. Democratic inclusion rather than systematic exclusion should be the touchstone of our Democracy. We should not be erecting new barriers to keep these would-be new Americans out of our community, especially through unaccountable administrative action. I strongly urge you not to raise these further barriers, and to instead keep the door to the American Dream open to those who want to pursue it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



3/29/07

XIANG PING CHEN

Naturalization Program Casemanager at the Asian Counseling & Referral Service
720 -8th Avenue South, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98104