

I would like to protest the proposed rate hikes for citizenship.

I've been involved in the citizenship process for more than a year, and the system IS AWFUL. However, I do not think raising the fees as much as double is the answer.

The system needs to be FIXED, as in complete overhaul. We should not throw money at a bad system in hopes of making it better.

also, doubling the fees represents quite a hardship. My husband and I paid more than \$1,000 in fees and we're only halfway through the process. We have more forms to file later this year.

In the meantime, we had our interview in October and have not heard a thing about our case almost 6 months later. Not one piece of mail, not one phone call, not one email. And there is no one we can call to check the status of the case. We have nowhere to turn.

THAT is why the system is broken. It isn't about serving the petitioner. So far, it has been us sending in check after check into a big black hole with no guarantee of a return and no place to turn for information. It is maddening.

In the meantime, we want to start a family and perhaps buy a house. We are prepared for the additional fees this year to complete the process we began, but in the case we get turned down and must begin again, we face (under the proposed system) \$2,000 right at the start for another years-long path to citizenship. In the new system, citizenship fees could exceed \$3,000, and that's without a lawyer.

We need that money for health care, pre-natal checkups, daycare once the baby is born, a down payment on a house so we aren't throwing away \$1,000 each month in rent.

The citizenship process is VITAL. It isn't a luxury. It is something we ALL must face. And the proposed fee increases are going to hurt a lot of people like us: middle class, wanting to build a life together but being hampered by this fee and that one.

I've heard the argument that "if they cannot afford the fees, they should not be here" but I know PLENTY of U.S. citizens in MUCH worse financial situations than us.

We live on a budget. We don't buy Starbucks coffee every day. We're smart. But \$600 is \$600. And \$600 for one form HURTS.

Please consider the hardship you are putting on the people in this process. Higher fees do not "keep out undesirables." I am a U.S. citizen. I was born and raised in the heartland of America. And it is MY dreams of a family that are on the line here.

Please DO NOT raise the fees. Fix the system, YES! PLEASE! I BEG YOU!

But it can be fixed for less. Please do not burden us even more. Please keep the fees as they are and find less expensive solutions.

Sincerely,
Jennifer J.