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Director, Regulatory Management Division  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Department of Homeland Security  
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 3d Floor  
Washington, DC 20529

Director, Regulatory Management Division:

As an attorney practicing in the field of immigration law, I have significant experience with the immigration process. I am absolutely disgusted and appalled by the Service's proposal to radically increase its fees; in some instances threefold.

In addition to questionable calculations DHS/USCIS has made in justifying the increase, it has also failed to account for its other revenues. The proposal further fails to consider circumstances whereby applicants may not need certain benefits, but would be required to pay for them anyway (i.e. EADs and travel documents in AOS applications). However, the most abhorrent spectre that the proposed increase raises is the impact it will have on potential applicants.

The fee increases will effectively impose a means test on the ability of immigrants to attain U.S. citizenship and/or other immigration benefits, which is contrary to our national interest and values. Moreover, those foreign nationals who might otherwise seek immigration benefits may be deterred from doing so when they might have to sacrifice a significant portion of their living wages simply to pay one application fee! This is entirely unacceptable, particularly at a time when immigration reform is so much on the tongues of the American people.

The Service has raised its fees in the recent past, ostensibly to ensure better service and more expedient processing times. However, with each passing fee increase, the service levels continue to fall, processing times continue to lag, and the level of competency of Service officers continues to wane. Indeed, despite all the reorganization, fee increases, funding increases, and "five dollar handles" assigned to government agencies post 9/11, it is abundantly clear to most seasoned immigration attorneys that USCIS is just as slow, inept, and incompetent as the INS was prior to 9/11. Throwing more money at the problem in the form of increased fees will not fix it - it never has and it never will.

USCIS needs to make do with the fee structure that they currently have (some fees are already too high) and obtain funding through other more appropriate venues as delineated in the law. The problems of USCIS lies within - with the efficacy of its officers and processing procedures - not with the amounts of money already collected from fees and appropriations. USCIS needs to become introspective and do some major housecleaning, not just demand more money from applicants. This has been the long-standing

bloated government answer to every bureaucratic snafu (i.e. get more money) and history has shown that this has NEVER been an effective solution. Lastly, and most importantly, USCIS needs to cease its notion that it can operate with absolute impunity from wrongdoing, and start becoming more accountable not only to those people that utilize its services, but also to the American taxpayers that demand a fair and equitable immigration system.

Sincerely,

William J. Banks, Esq.