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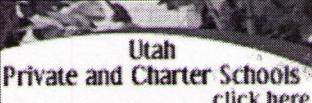


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U.S. fees for seeking citizenship may rise

By **Deborah Bulkeley**

Deseret Morning News

MURRAY — Mildred Shurtleff says she has wanted to apply for citizenship for years, but the cost has been a hindrance.

The Salt Lake homemaker says she took out a loan to cover the \$330 application fee and the \$70 fingerprint fee. Shurtleff, a green card holder originally from Mexico, shook her head when she heard those fees could increase.

"I cannot even think about prices raising for people like me who don't have that much," said Shurtleff, a mother of three and a schoolteacher's wife.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced this week that it wants to raise the application fee for citizenship to \$595, as part of a broader fee increase proposal for the applications it handles. The agency also wants to raise the fingerprinting fee for applicants to \$80.

The proposal is undergoing a 60-day comment period and would take effect in June at the earliest.

The agency said the proposed increase averages 66 percent in actual costs to applicants, and would reduce processing times by an average 20 percent by the end of fiscal year 2009. In Utah, the current processing time is within six

April 2 at that Web address, or by fax to 866-466-5370 or via mail to: Director, Regulatory Management Division, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, 111 Massachusetts Ave., NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC, 20529. Use DHS Docket Number USCIS-2006-0044.

E-mail: dbulkeley@desnews.com

Dear Director,

I'm writing in response to the fee hike proposal for immigration and citizenship services. They are unfairly large, target the weak, and those increased costs could be partially covered from Homeland Security funds.

For people making generally low wages, these are huge expenses. A 66% increase in any expense for anyone is big, but for working poor, it may be insurmountable.

Didn't someone say: "you can measure a society's values by how they behave toward their weakest members"? This leans more toward usury than compassion.

The Homeland Security Dept. should request the necessary funds to run their operation. To depend on fees to operate the Immigration services is unreasonable. How many other agencies operate exclusively from fees? Libraries? Police? Border Patrol? Very few I would ~~go~~ guess. So why prey on the poor and weak? Because we can?

In short, it seems as if your current proposal is an attempt to make money on the backs of our immigrant population; it certainly appears that way from a distance. The steepness of the proposed increase also seems unjust. I hope you'll reconsider, and petition the Homeland Security Dept. for any necessary funding increases.

Sincerely

Tom Rangle

Longmont, Co

(Volunteer Citizenship Teacher)

P.S. Please reply so I know you received this. Thanks.