



# NATF

## New Americans Task Force

Lincoln / Lancaster County, Nebraska

### Vision Statement:

NATF is a network of public and private agencies and community members in Lincoln and Lancaster County dedicated to supporting New Americans. We strive to welcome all newcomers, assisting them in building the lives they seek through the removal of barriers and the provision of culturally competent support services.

March 8, 2007

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

Re: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2006-0044

This letter is a plea for reconsideration of the plans to increase application fees by as much as 96% because of budget reconsideration and heightened security concerns, and the cost of going to an electronic environment for all applicants.

We write to you as members of the New Americans Task Force in Lincoln, Nebraska, a network of 40 public and private organizations and community members, dedicated to supporting new Americans in our community. For over 10 years NATF has worked to make Lincoln's human service agencies more aware of the challenges new Americans face and how best to go about solving them. The 2000 Census reports Nebraska's foreign-born population increased from 28,198 in 1990 to 74,638 in 2000, a change of 164.7%

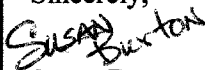
We can attest to the struggles that new Americans are facing each day. Financially strapped and burdened by overwhelming relocation issues, their first step is in acquiring a better grasp of English. Add on to that the reality of working in primarily minimum wage jobs and attempting to find more than one job to pay for family expenses. Much further down the path to functioning capably in American society is finding time to acquire computer skills.

Implementing even higher increases in the immigration fees that are already imposed and often re-imposed (as clients are often required to submit documents several different years because of time lags in processing) adds to the high fees clients are forced to pay their lawyers to process these applications. These fees are already beyond that of a normal inflationary increase. These fees appear destined to allow only the richest new Americans to take part in becoming permanent residents or citizens.

There must be a more gradual approach to implementing your new procedures. Implementing systems change takes time. Reorganizing our mental health system for children, developing TANF guidelines, and institutionalizing changes like Title IX did not happen overnight. The approach was gradual and the results institutionally successful over time.

We have numerous clients who can relate the years of financial strain and anxiety that they have faced because of immigration. Their stories demand that we approach this issue with a heightened sense of humanity. Thank you for consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

  
Susan Burton  
Co-Chairs

  
Georgia L. Stevens

NATF

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