
From: Weintraub, Lynne [mailto:WeintraubL@joneslibrary.org]
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As the coordinator of a citizenship preparation program, I am absolutely opposed to any increase in naturalization fees. In fact, I think it would be in the national interest to eliminate such fees altogether. The refusal of USCIS leadership to ask Congress for a reasonable budget allocation seems suspiciously like a partisan attempt at suppressing the vote in 2008. I can say without a doubt that fees in the range of \$700 will prevent many of my students from being able to naturalize, and as a result, to vote in elections.

In addition, USCIS spokespeople imply that they are only asking for fees increases to cover costs incurred in processing the naturalization applications. This is not true. USCIS uses fee receipts to pay for operations (such as the Office of Citizenship) and to cover the cost of asylum and refugee processing, for which they don't charge fees. It is unfair to expect naturalization applicants to cover these costs as well, and I feel that the failure to mention this information when justifying the fee increases is dishonest and does a disservice to immigrants and to the American public.

Yes, we all want to see more timely and efficient processing of applications. It's the obligation of the agency to continuously improve its services to the public, (and there is plenty of room for improvement there). But such a huge fee increase cannot be justified on this basis, and when it is put in such terms, I believe it smacks of extortion. NO FEE INCREASE CAN BE JUSTIFIED—regardless of whether processing efficiency is part of the bargain.

Lynne Weintraub, Coordinator
ESL Center
43 Amity St.
Amherst MA 01002
413 259-3093