

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2007

Richard A. Sloan
Director, Regulatory Management Division
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Director Sloan:

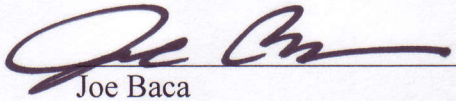
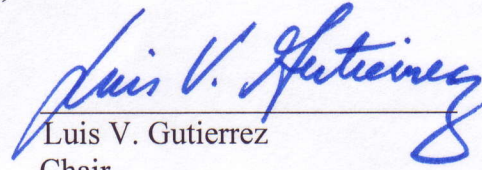
The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) has long defended the needs of immigrants who come here to improve our nation, their own lives, and the lives of their families. In addition to this commitment, the CHC aims to highlight the vital contributions immigrants make to our communities and our economy. As such, we are concerned about the fee increases proposed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

To an individual or family hoping for a better life in our country, an average increase of 66% is extremely steep. It would be cost prohibitive for a family who wants to come here legally, play by the rules and contribute, and such an increase may have the perverse result of inhibiting people from immigrating legally. This proposed increase is effectively pricing potential legal immigrants out of benefits for which they are eligible.

We understand that it is important to review the costs of processing immigration applications and the need for the agency to have the funds it needs to provide quality services in an efficient manner. However, also important is gauging the real rationale and impact of potential cost increases. As presented, the proposed fee increase appears to burden future legal immigrants with budget shortfalls and mismanagement of the past. This is wrong. Moreover, we understand that, initially, the cost increase will not necessarily be accompanied by service increases as USCIS works to implement improvements. Customer service and processing backlogs have not improved enough to justify such a steep fee increase. Predicting better service on the backs of the next wave of immigrants we want to help strikes us not only as unfair, but also as a questionable way to do business.

USCIS is tasked with a critical job that is vitally important to us, our constituents, and this Congress. There are many elements of the fee increase that we trust you will closely consider. The proposed fee increase includes costs directly associated with processing applications, as well as indirect costs, such as infrastructure improvements, automating A files, and USCIS administrative headquarters. However, rather than burden applicants with these costs, USCIS should have engaged Congress to cooperatively work to identify how to more appropriately cover those costs with appropriations or other means.

Sincerely,


Joe Baca
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
Luis V. Gutierrez
Chair
CHC Immigration Task Force