

**From:** mail.relay@mailmanager.net [mailto:mail.relay@mailmanager.net] **On Behalf Of** Patricia R. Hughes  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 27, 2007 5:31 PM  
**To:** OS Comments  
**Subject:** DHS Docket No. USCIS-2006-0044

Patricia R. Hughes  
1610 Lombard Street #304  
San Francisco, CA 94123-3052

March 27, 2007

OS Comments

Dear OS Comments:

Director, Regulatory Management Division  
US Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Department of Homeland Security  
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 3rd floor  
Washington DC 20529.

RE: DHS Docket # USCIS-2006-0044

Proposed rule — Adjustment of the Immigration and Naturalization Benefit  
Application and Petition Fee Schedule

I, Patricia Ruth Hughes, am deeply concerned about the proposed USCIS fee increase referenced above.

I have worked more than 30 years with, and continue to assist the Southeast Asian and other refugee and immigrant communities in our country. These newcomers have breathed new life into some of our nearly lost family values and creation of community around neighborhoods. They are more committed to "American Values" of hard work, education, family sacrifice on one another's behalf than many of our own citizens. They encourage and support their children in education and work skills, while sacrificing their own personal desires. These same qualities on which the United States of America were founded.

I, and those with whom I work, are deeply troubled by the sheer size and scope of the fee increase. USCIS plans to increase citizenship fees from \$400 (\$330 application fee plus \$70 fingerprinting fee) to \$675 (\$595 application fee plus \$80 fingerprinting fee), an increase of 69 percent. It would also raise fees for 37 other immigration and naturalization petitions and applications at an average increase of 66 percent. Furthermore, it appears that the increase will take place at once rather than being spread out over a period of time.

It is not enough that immigration services and access to permanent status is often a tedious, time consuming endeavor. I have witness people being

stalled, turned away, and then after paying for the process many times, being accepted using the same application and presenting the same required documentation. If this very expensive process now becomes an outrageous 60% plus larger cost, it will further the existing low family incomes and the subsequent lack of funds for basic services to their children.

Rapid fee hikes of such magnitude will have a disproportionate and detrimental impact on the Asian American community. As the following figures reflect, Asian Americans constitute a significant portion of USCIS's customer base.

- 39% of people who naturalized in 2005 were born in Asia.
- Five of the top ten countries of birth for new U.S. citizens are Asian (Philippines, India, Vietnam, People's Republic of China, and Korea).
- 36% of people who became lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in 2005 were born in Asia.
- Five of the top ten countries of birth for new LPRs are Asian (India, China, Philippines, Vietnam, and Korea).
- Significant numbers of asylees and refugees came from Asian countries such as Laos (16 percent of refugees admitted in 2005) and China (21 percent of asylum granted in 2005).

I currently assist Southeast Asian community organizations, and services to families, in San Jose and Richmond, California. These organizations are committed to assuring that families learn how to care for their children, that childcare options (other than being watched by an older child) are available at costs they can afford and within their own neighborhoods. They are also sharing their traditional stories and wealth of cultural arts, enlivening and encouraging others of us to value and preserve our own ethnic roots. They teach their members America's traditional values of hard work, family and community, and adherence to the tenets our country was built on.

The massive and abrupt fee increase proposed by USCIS will delay or prevent Asian Americans from becoming U.S. citizens, reuniting with their families, contributing their knowledge and skills to our economy, and settling into our society after having escaped persecution.

- A family of four LPRs who want to apply for U.S. citizenship at the same time will now have to have \$2,700 at their disposal in order to achieve their American dream together.

- A family of four which has been granted asylum in the U.S. and is applying for permanent residence will now need \$3,620 in hand in order to apply for permanent residence.

- Furthermore, asylees applying for permanent residence will be ineligible to apply for fee waivers, no matter how dire their financial situation may be, because USCIS intends to categorically eliminate fee waivers for I-485 applications for adjustment as a part of the fee increase.

- The proposal would also prohibit U.S. citizens and LPRs from requesting fee waivers on I-130 relative petitions on the grounds that the petitioners must file affidavits of support to show that they can support their beneficiaries should they be unable to do so themselves.

The fee hike and the blanket ban on fee waivers on certain applications

and petitions would be particularly burdensome to the roughly 12 percent of the Asian American community which lives below the poverty level.

Given the speed, scope and scale of the proposed fee increase, we believe that USCIS customers must receive faster, greater, and more concrete improvements in processing times and customer service. The fee increase proposal itself does not appear to set forth any concrete targets for improvement in these areas.

Finally, we believe that certain improvements which the USCIS wants to finance through the fee increase would be better addressed through the normal budget and appropriations process. For instance, while we support USCIS's efforts to improve its fraud detection capacity and to modernize its business and technological infrastructure, we do not believe that immigrants and their families should bear the sole burden for these efforts.

In conclusion, we urge USCIS to reconsider the proposed fee increase. We hope that the agency will work with immigrant communities, and with Congress, to develop a functioning, effective immigration system that will benefit our country.

Sincerely,

Patricia R. Hughes  
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