

Fee Increase for Immigration Papers Planned

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Body

The Obama administration on Wednesday proposed an overall **increase** of about 10 percent in **fees** for **immigration** documents, but kept the **fee** for immigrants to become United States citizens unchanged.

Alejandro Mayorkas, director of Citizenship and **Immigration** Services, said the **fee increase** was necessary because declining applications for documents in the past two years had lowered revenues and left his agency -- which is 90 percent financed by **fees** -- with a budget shortfall of about \$200 million for the coming fiscal year.

"We understand the effect of a **fee increase** on many of the communities we serve," Mr. Mayorkas said.

Under the proposal, the **fee** to apply for a green card, the document for legal permanent residents, would **increase** to \$985 from \$930. The application for employment authorization would **increase** to \$380 from \$340. A separate **fee** for fingerprints and other biometrics with many applications would **increase** to \$85 from \$80.

Among several new **fees**, officials said, will be a \$6,230 charge for foreigners proposing to invest \$500,000 or more in businesses to create jobs in the United States.

The **fee** for naturalization would remain at \$595. That **fee** was raised in July 2007 by 69 percent and the **immigration** agency was overwhelmed by applications from immigrants rushing to file ahead of that **increase**. Since then, naturalization applications have dropped steeply and advocates blamed the higher **fee** for discouraging eligible immigrants from becoming citizens.

"We are particularly pleased that President Obama is holding true to statements he made during his campaign on the need for keeping citizenship affordable," said Fred Tsao, policy director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Chicago.

Some **fees** will be reduced, like the one for foreign fiancées or fiancés seeking to come here to marry citizens, which would drop to \$340 from \$455. **Fees** for temporary immigrants to become permanent residents would also decline, to \$1,020 from \$1,370.

The proposed **fees** will be officially published this week, opening a 45-day period for public comment, Mr. Mayorkas said. The new **fees** would take effect sometime before Oct. 1.

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