

U.S. Is Planning Faster Border Crossings for a Fee

The New York Times

December 30, 1990, Sunday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 1990 The New York Times Company

Distribution: National Desk

Section: Section 1;; Section 1; Part 1; Page 18; Column 4; National Desk; Part 1;; Column 4;

Length: 528 words

Byline: AP

AP

Dateline: WASHINGTON, Dec. 29

Body

The Immigration and Naturalization Service plans to establish express lanes at some border crossings to Mexico and Canada and to charge a fee for the faster service as a way of financing improved security at the nation's borders.

Verne Jervis, a spokesman for the agency, said it would start the system next year. Express-lane locations and the amount of the fee have not been decided, he said.

The idea is drawing opposition from Hispanic rights advocates.

Supporters of a border-crossing fee said the agency's proposal was a start, but they added that the agency could adopt a more ambitious program to pay for improved border security under legislation passed by Congress this year.

'Ducking for Cover Already'

"They have an opportunity for an aggressive, intelligent program, and the results could provide for a permanent, effective financing vehicle for sound border security, and they're ducking for cover already," said Dan Stein, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a lobbying group based in Washington.

Advocates of the rights of Hispanic people questioned the establishment of any fee, even if optional, for crossing the border. Cecilia Munoz of the National Council of La Raza expressed discomfort about "paying to get into a country."

"We're living in an age when walls are coming down in other parts of the world," Ms. Munoz said, "and yet the United States is considering a fee for coming in."

She also questioned whether the immigration agency, which is part of the Justice Department, could handle the new program, given its current management and financial difficulties. The General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, was critical of the agency's administration and budget process in a recent draft report.

U.S. Is Planning Faster Border Crossings for a Fee

Shortages of Inspectors

The accounting office said the I.N.S. has critical shortages of inspectors at the largest **border crossings**. Delays of several hours are not uncommon for travelers at some **crossings**, the accounting office said.

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Jervis said the agency would not be tackling a new program "if we didn't think we could handle it."

Ms. Munoz said a **fee** was likely to hit hardest those least able to afford the cost, including poorer residents of the Southwest who travel frequently between the **United States** and Mexico visiting relatives, those who commute legally over the **border** or who have businesses in both countries.

Called a Boon to Commerce

But the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which proposed a **fee** for **border crossings** two years ago, said quicker inspections paid for by the **fee** would be a boon to commerce.

"The biggest detriment to trans-**border** commerce is the two- to three-hour wait currently encountered in cross-**border** excursions," Mr. Stein said. "Those who are crossing the **border** for legitimate reasons will be more than happy to pay for better and **faster** inspections. Time is money."

Mr. Stein said a \$2 **fee** would increase the budget for the immigration service by 50 percent. The money could also be used to help control drug smuggling and violence on the **border**, he said.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: **BORDER** CONTROL (99%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL **BORDERS** (93%); IMMIGRATION (90%); NATIONAL SECURITY (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (89%); INVESTIGATIONS (88%); SHORTAGES (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (78%); INSPECTIONS (77%); PUBLIC FINANCE (77%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (77%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (72%); LEGISLATION (70%); LOBBYING (69%); GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (69%); EXECUTIVES (67%); INTERVIEWS (67%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (63%)

Company: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (55%); NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA (55%); NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA (55%)

Organization: FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (55%); NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA (55%); NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA (55%); IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE (US)

Industry: BUDGETS (72%); GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (69%); ACCOUNTING (68%)

Geographic: **UNITED STATES** (94%); MEXICO (92%); NORTH AMERICA (92%); CANADA (79%)

Load-Date: December 30, 1990

U.S. Is Planning Faster Border Crossings for a Fee

End of Document