



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0529

July 06, 2016

Mr. Leon Rodriguez
Director
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Director Rodriguez:

We write regarding the recently released USCIS proposed rule which would revise its fee schedule for several immigration and naturalization services. In the United States, there are over 8.4 million Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) who are eligible for U.S. citizenship. When LPRs naturalize, they improve their proficiency in the English language, and are more inclined to learn about our government and our history, enhancing the civic and economic lives of our communities. Over the last decade the fees to become a naturalized citizen have nearly tripled which has led to a sharp drop in applications for naturalization. We appreciate your efforts in trying to revise the fee schedule in order to ensure it does not continue to be a barrier to U.S. citizenship.

Becoming a U.S. citizen is an important decision for an immigrant and their family members, one that requires a demonstrated commitment to our country and our values. While the agency's proposed fee schedule includes an increase of \$45 to the naturalization fee from \$595 to \$640 not include the \$85 additional fee for biometrics, we are pleased to see the extension of a new partial fee waiver.

The new partial waiver of the naturalization fee would allow applicants with family incomes between 150% and 200% of the federal poverty level to pay only half of the fee. This proposed rule will make the naturalization fee more accessible to many more applicants. Estimates show that 1 million eligible-to-naturalize adults could be eligible for the new partial fee waiver in the United States. Unfortunately, the proposed fee schedule also includes high increases to the application fee for children of naturalized citizens. Under your proposal, the N-600 form application fee would increase by 95% from \$600 to \$1,170. This is particularly troubling as this application is mostly used by U.S. citizens who want to bring their adopted children to live with them in the United States. We encourage you to consider keeping the N-600 fee low.

We are also alarmed by the proposed increase to the N-565 form to replace a naturalization certificate. This fee is set to increase by 61% from \$345 to \$555. Naturalized citizens are

required to use their naturalization certificates for multiple reasons like petitioning foreign relatives or applying for passports. There are also multiple situations that might cause a person to lose or misplace important documents like the naturalization certificate, many of which are out of their control. The proposed increase to the N-565 form would create an incredible financial burden for people who need to obtain copies of their naturalization certificates.

We understand that USCIS operations are primarily funded through application fees. The proposed fee rule notes that application fees must cover such costs as the adjudication of humanitarian applications (such as those submitted by refugees and asylees); certain Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program costs; and costs of operating the Office of Citizenship. To eliminate what is essentially a surcharge on naturalization and immigration applications to cover these costs, we continue to work with our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to provide discretionary funding, including at least \$225 million for the adjudication of refugee and asylee applications. We would also like to respectfully suggest looking into expanding the Premium Processing Service to petitions and applications that are not currently eligible for this service such as the I-131 Application for Travel document. We believe that this would be beneficial in assisting those who need to travel in an expedited manner while also providing additional funding for USCIS.

Over the past ten years, more than 6.6 million lawful permanent residents became naturalized citizens, with over 650,000 people in FY 2014. We all share a commitment in supporting immigrants who have followed the law and are dedicated to becoming part of our great nation. When immigrants raise their hand and pledge allegiance to the United States, they strengthen our democracy and grow the pool of talent available to fill the important jobs in the nation, including elected office.

The full integration of new Americans will make our country more prosperous, and so we respectfully request USCIS carefully consider our concerns. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

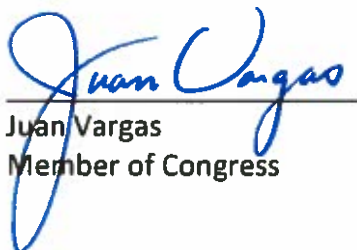
Sincerely,



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



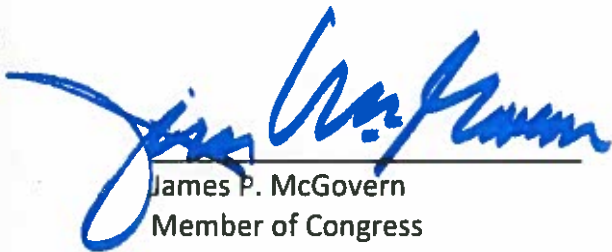
Albio Sires
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John Conyers
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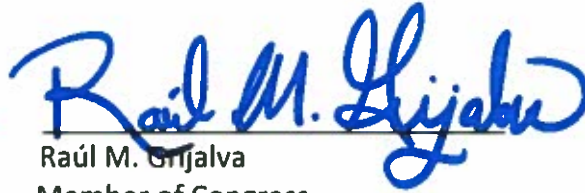
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Member of Congress



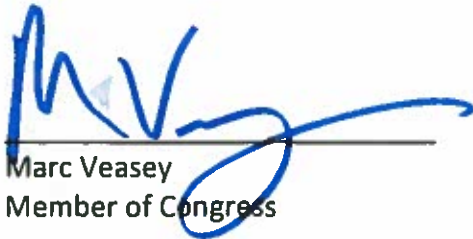
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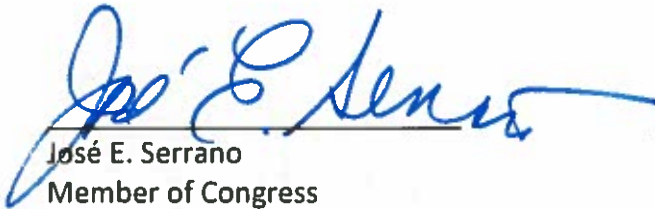
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



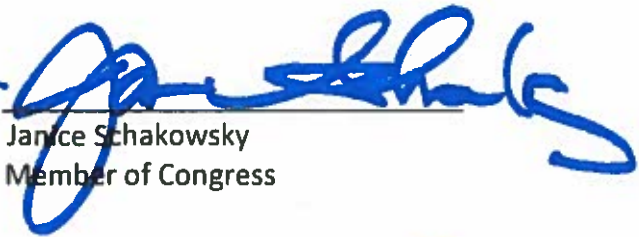
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David Loebsock
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