

Recommendation from the CIS Ombudsman to the Director, USCIS

Submitted June 29, 2004

Recommend the deletion of any reference within USCIS forms (“I” & “N” forms) that indicates a specific fee amount applies to an action, and replacing such language with the statement (or equivalent), “A fee is required to process this action. Information on the current fee for this action is available on the Internet at www.uscis.gov and by telephone from the National Customer Service Center at (800) 375-5283. If the correct fee is not included, the action will not be accepted by USCIS.”

I. Background

At present there is a disparity regarding processing fees between the information contained within the instructions section of USCIS forms and the actual fee amounts required from the immigration customer by 8 C.F.R. § 103.7(b)(1). This disparity causes: 1) confusion to the immigration customer who may rely on the printed information within the form; 2) the filing of petitions and applications with a fee amount in consonance with the printed information within the form, but different from the regulated fee amount; 3) and subsequent extra handling of petitions and applications by both USCIS and the immigration customer resulting in processing delays, customer frustration, and additional incurred handling costs by USCIS.

II. Justification

It is the responsibility of government to provide the public with concise and accurate information within any application or petition form, especially to the fee being charged for a government action. At present, this is not the case for USCIS forms. This failure to provide concise and accurate fee information within USCIS forms only adds to customer confusion and frustration with an immigration process currently not considered as being customer-friendly or responsive.

III. Benefits

The Ombudsman determined the implementation of this recommendation by USCIS would yield significant benefits to the immigration customer and USCIS.

- Customer Service: Customers have less frustration with a process that is less confusing from the onset. Implementation of this recommendation would eliminate potential customer reliance on incorrect information currently printed within USCIS forms and reduce USCIS rejections of applications and petitions containing incorrect fees.
- USCIS Efficiency: Implementation of this recommendation would increase USCIS efficiency by reducing the number of applications and petitions received by USCIS with the incorrect fee. USCIS now absorbs the cost of packaging and shipping such an application/petition back to the immigration customer with a USCIS-prepared explanation for the rejection.