



Toolkit: How to Fight Against Unfair USCIS Fees

What You Need to Know

What's happening?

Every two years, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reviews the fees it charges for immigration applications to see if any changes are necessary and appropriate to cover agency costs. On November 14, 2019, USCIS published a proposal to radically increase fees for vital applications. The rule disproportionately impacts the working class and non-wealthy.

We need you to send a strong message to USCIS insisting that people should not be priced out of safety, security, and fair process.



Who the proposed rule affects and why we are concerned.

- The proposed rule creates insurmountable obstacles and financial barriers for refugees, asylees, immigrants, and U.S. citizens seeking to change their status, receive a needed work or travel permit, or re-unify with family members. This includes an exorbitant and unprecedented 83% increase for naturalization from \$640 to \$1,170 that will hit nearly 9 million legal permanent residents in the U.S. Cutting off access to citizenship means creating obstacles to civic integration, depriving communities of the increased financial contributions of naturalized citizens, and creating a system that values a person based on wealth alone.
 - While increasing fees, USCIS strips access for low-income individuals by completely eliminating fee waivers for a number of critical applications, including naturalization and green cards. Fee waivers are only offered in special cases where the ability of people to apply is in the public interest even if they cannot afford the fees. This includes many humanitarian situations, such as those affecting refugees, asylees, and victims of trafficking. Fee waivers are possible because USCIS balances their budget with the fees paid by other applicants. At the same time, the proposal includes a transfer of over \$207 million from USCIS fees paid by applicants to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a separate agency responsible for immigration enforcement, not immigration services.
 - Asylees have been granted asylum in the U.S. by USCIS or an immigration court judge because they face persecution in their home country. After one year, asylees can apply to get a green card, which provides a more secure status as they rebuild their lives in safety and freedom. The proposed rule sets the fee at \$1,120 and removes the possibility of a fee waiver. This puts green cards beyond the reach of many hard working asylees. A single mother with two children, for example, would have to pay \$3,360. This is more than double the monthly income of an adult working full-time at the federal minimum wage.
 - The United States recognizes the right of asylum for people fleeing persecution. Introducing an unprecedented fee for asylum threatens to restrict life-saving access to the legal system. In doing so, the U.S. would join just three other countries (Iran, Fiji, and Australia) with such oppressive requirements.
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How to Take Action

What we're asking you to do:

1. Submit a **unique public comment** on the proposed rule on or before **December 30, 2019**;
2. **Reach out to your networks** to encourage them to take action by **sharing your opposition via social media** on USCIS's proposed fee increases and elimination of fee waivers;
3. **Ask your Members of Congress to co-sponsor bills** that will safeguard access to benefits.

Step #1: File a public comment by December 30, 2019.

Go to <https://act.rescue.org/feeschedule> to submit a comment directly to the Federal Register using a template. Anyone can submit a public comment to the Federal Register. Feel free to customize the template and make it unique with your voice, perspective, and story. **Unique comments are individually counted by DHS.**

You can also directly access the Federal Register [here](#).

Sample Comment (Please personalize to make this a unique comment from you)

I am writing in opposition to the USCIS proposed rule that would hurt our neighbors and our communities by creating barriers to citizenship and restricting access to immigrant benefits for many.

Naturalization increases civic engagement, allows individuals to vote, and strengthens our economy and our country. Eliminating fee waivers for key applications, including naturalization and green cards, unfairly puts these benefits out of reach for millions of hard-working people and creates a value system based only on wealth. Instituting an unprecedented fee to apply for asylum places an insurmountable financial barrier between those fleeing war and persecution and the lifesaving refuge and freedom for all that is protected under U.S. and international law.

I strongly urge you to rescind these harmful fee increases and new fee proposals, which would create an immigration system that values potential applicants based on their ability to pay. The American Dream should not have a price tag.

Step #2: Encourage your networks to file public comments and elevate opposition on social media.

With such a short comment period, help us reach more people and raise awareness of how harmful these proposed changes are for thousands of individuals, neighbors, and friends. Share <https://act.rescue.org/feeschedule> by posting the link on social media, emailing to friends, and sharing widely with allies.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS:

- .@USCIS is hiking fees to price people out of citizenship, #DACA, and asylum protections. Submit a public comment today to fight against unfair fees! <https://act.rescue.org/feeschedule> #KeepCitizenshipAffordable #NoPayWallforAsylum
- A fee to apply for asylum values wealth over people's lives. Let DHS know this is not an American value! Join @RESCUEorg and submit a public comment now! <https://act.rescue.org/feeschedule> #NoPayWallforAsylum
- [.@USCIS](#) is proposing to eliminate fee waivers for hard-working green card holders and increase the fee for citizenship by 83%. This inhibits integration and further financial contributions and gains to local economies. Act now: <https://act.rescue.org/feeschedule> #KeepCitizenshipAffordable

Tips and Pointers

- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) **must consider all unique public comments filed on time**. If it appears the agency did not consider substantive public comments, it may open the agency to litigation under the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).
- **After DHS carefully considers public comments received on the proposed rule, DHS plans to issue a final fee schedule rule** that will include an effective date at least 60 days after the date the *final* rule is published. In the meantime, and until a final rule is in effect, USCIS will continue to apply the current fee schedule.
- **Remember: public comments are just that, public**, so what you end up posting will be available for the government and the public to see. You can submit a comment with your name or anonymously.
- **Want more information on the substance of the proposed rule before filing a public comment?** Check out CLINIC's Fee Schedule Fighters [webpage](#).
- **Share more than once!** The comment period is open for 30 days so be sure to send reminders to your supporters during this time and share this information in a variety of ways.

Step #3: Ask Congress to step-up and preserve access to benefits.

There are currently two important pieces of legislation that support continued access to immigrant benefits: the Citizenship Affordability Act and the New Deal for New Americans. Ask your Members of Congress to cosponsor these bills today:

- The Citizenship Affordability Act (HR 3328/S 1862) would safeguard the ability of low-income immigrants legally residing in the United States to naturalize.
- The New Deal for New Americans Act (H.R. 4928) would safeguard access to citizenship, foster immigrant and refugee inclusion, and encourage integration.

**THANK YOU for your support and for speaking up
against unjust barriers to immigration!**

For questions regarding this toolkit, please contact the IRC Policy & Advocacy Team at advocacy@rescue.org