

USCIS Filing Fees Increasing

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Expect USCIS filing fees to increase by about 10% later this year. USCIS announced at the beginning of June that it is seeking public commentary on a proposed rule to increase most filing fees. What does this mean for you?

If you feel you qualify for an immigration benefit and are price conscious, contact a reputable immigration attorney to avoid paying higher USCIS filing fees. Depending on any given office's caseload, your case may take several weeks or more to process, even before filing.

You may recall in July 2007, filing fees increased significantly. The law requires USCIS review its fee structure every two years to ensure operating costs are recouped. Consider that 90% of the USCIS budget comes from filing fees. While increased fees may give the appearance of faster processing times, one also has to take inflation and the standard of living into account. However, one thing is certain: do not expect faster processing without higher fees.

Patience is key when dealing with immigration matters. We often speak with people and explain a visa number (permanent residence) may not be available for them for ten years. What they fail to understand, however, is without taking the initial step (for example, having a family member file an I-130 on their behalf), the ten-year wait period "clock" will never begin. Waiting for ten years to pass, and *then* filing the I-130 will only cause the applicant to have to wait at least an additional ten years (for a total of at least 20). Even still, one of the most difficult decisions an applicant may face is having to return to his or her home country to apply for a waiver in the event they entered illegally.

Regardless of your situation, you should at the very least determine if you qualify for an immigration benefit.