



# Press Release

April 14, 2004

## **USCIS ANNOUNCES FEE ADJUSTMENTS TO ENHANCE SERVICE**

Washington, D.C.— U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will announce tomorrow in the *Federal Register* a revised fee structure for immigration benefits. The new fee structure will become effective on April 30, 2004; 15 days after publication. The new fees add an average of \$55 to the current cost of immigration benefit applications, and increases the biometrics fee by \$20 for certain applications.

“USCIS is committed to delivering immigration services and benefits in a compassionate, effective and secure manner,” said USCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre. “The new fee structure will allow us to enhance service without compromising our commitment to national security.”

Federal guidelines require that USCIS collect fees, rather than using tax dollars, to recover the full costs associated with providing immigration services, and conduct a review every two years to ensure that adequate revenue is received. The proposed adjustment will recover costs associated with comprehensive security enhancements instituted after September 11, 2001, and enhance customer service by contributing to improved application processing times. The FY 2005 Budget requests an increase of \$60 million in appropriated funds to support backlog reduction efforts (for a total of \$160 million for this effort). USCIS plans to achieve the President’s goal to eliminate the application backlog and achieve a six-month processing time standard for all immigration benefit applications by FY 2006.

In its first year, USCIS prioritized the integrity of the legal immigration system, conducting 35 million national security checks to make certain that the right applicant receives the right benefit in the right amount of time, and to prevent the wrong applicant from accessing our benefits. In the area of customer service, USCIS eliminated the lines at many of its highest volume offices, introduced on-line options for certain application filings and case status updates, and established a bilingual, toll-free customer help-line.

– USCIS –

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing the integrity of our nation's security.