

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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CITIZENSHIP FEE HIKE AN OBSTACLE TO IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Citizenship is a national good the government should promote, not put out of reach.

WASHINGTON, DC – The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) is deeply concerned with the increase in the application fee for U.S. citizenship and residency. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced it will double, and in some cases triple, fees for immigration and naturalization applications. The administration should find a solution that promotes immigrant integration. Making citizenship and residency accessible and affordable to low income immigrants is the first step.

CLINIC published a national citizenship plan, *A More Perfect Union*, after more than two years of research, writing, and interviewing more than 108 experts and community advocates. One of its first recommendations is that Congress should help fund application processing.

The plan says, “Adequate funding would allow USCIS to halt annual fee increases, reduce its backlogs, and improve the technology for application processing and its customer services.” Unlike USCIS’s fee raise, CLINIC’s plan “should ensure that all Legal Permanent Residents have access to citizenship, regardless of their socioeconomic class or ethnic background.”

"Donald Kerwin, CLINIC’s Executive Director, noted that “these increases will deny access to the immigration system to many eligible immigrants. They represent a barrier to immigrant integration at a time when the President is appropriately pushing to give more immigrants a path to legal status.”

In June 2006 President George W. Bush announced a plan “to create a ‘task force on new Americans’ to expand local initiatives to help immigrants integrate into American society.” The fee increases work at cross purposes to this initiative. Kerwin stated: “it serves the national interest to promote citizenship, encourage integration, and allow immigrants to contribute fully to the good of our nation. Our nation has been built by the contributions of newcomers of all backgrounds. Raising the obstacles to integration goes against this proud legacy.”

**CLINIC’s *A More Perfect Union: A National Citizenship Plan* is available on-line:
<http://www.cliniclegal.org/DNP/citzplan.html>**

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The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation’s largest network of charitable immigration services with 161 affiliates in 262 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies. www.cliniclegal.org