



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
August 3, 2020

Contact: Kevin Perez-Allen, kperezallen@naleo.org
(714) 499-4481

Marcus Silva, msilva@naleo.org
(510) 456-5444

NALEO Educational Fund Condemns USCIS Naturalization Fee Increase

*USCIS naturalization fee increase is antithetical to
our nation's values of welcoming new Americans*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund released a statement from CEO Arturo Vargas in response to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) announcement of an exorbitant naturalization fee increase and elimination of fee waivers set to go into effect on October 2, 2020:

"The Administration's fee increase goes against our core values of fairness and extending opportunity to those who look to our nation hoping to become full participants in American civic life. Raising naturalization fees by 83 percent, to \$1,170 while eliminating most fee waivers effectively pushes naturalization out of reach for those who dream of becoming Americans, including more than four million Latino lawful permanent residents who are eligible for U.S. citizenship.

"Naturalization has ushered in generations of new Americans who have helped expand our diversity, grow our economy, and enrich our democracy through increased participation in American elections. Congressional directives and the positions of previous administrations have advanced the central tenet that naturalization has a distinct and special value to our nation and, therefore, must be affordable.

"There is no legitimate justification for these fee increases. While USCIS maintains that such increases are meant to cover the costs of adjudicating naturalizations, the agency has added unnecessary and arbitrary administrative procedures and red tape to the process, which has inflated costs for the U.S. citizenship application process. Now, the agency is trying to pass those unnecessary costs onto individuals who wish to naturalize.

"The agency based its fee hikes on a study with incomplete data and faulty assumptions. When USCIS solicited input on the study from stakeholders, the agency did so in a rushed and ineffective manner, ultimately preventing stakeholders from being able to analyze the proposals in a thorough and thoughtful way. It has also denied the existence of extensive evidence submitted by stakeholders, which demonstrates its plans are unworkable and constitutionally suspect.

"Historically, the fee study's purpose has been to align such fees with the economic realities faced by both USCIS and those who pursue its services, including lawful permanent residents.

That is why in light of this objective, the agency's decision to raise naturalization fees amid the COVID-19 pandemic is nonsensical, unfair, and cruel. It is oblivious to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having harsh financial impacts on many people, particularly Latinos, who are disproportionately experiencing severe economic and health consequences. Unbelievably, the agency acknowledges these effects but states that it is not taking them into account whatsoever in its plan to increase naturalization fees. The Administration must reverse course and follow congressional directives to keep fees affordable while maintaining fee waivers for those who qualify for citizenship but cannot afford the associated costs.

"For more than 35 years, NALEO Educational Fund has guided thousands of lawful permanent residents in their naturalization process. In continuation of that service, we urge lawful permanent residents to apply for U.S. Citizenship before October 2, 2020, when the fee increases are set to go into effect. While these fee increases and fee waiver eliminations will undoubtedly end up in the courts, the best way to avoid them is to begin the naturalization process now."

Individuals interested in applying for U.S. citizenship can call NALEO Educational Fund's toll-free bilingual hotline at 888-839-8682 from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. Live operators are available to provide potential new citizens with vital information on every aspect of the naturalization process, including referrals to NALEO Educational Fund staff available to assist individuals with their citizenship application remotely.

For additional information on the naturalization process, please visit our [website](#).

###

About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.