



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NALEO Educational Fund Statement on USCIS Naturalization Fee Increase**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today released a statement from Chief Executive Officer Arturo Vargas in response to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announcement of a naturalization fee increase going into effect on April 1, 2024:

“Any fee increase raises the barriers to naturalization for many applicants. We recognize that USCIS has made progress in addressing barriers to naturalization, but given the current economic environment and other factors, the increase represents an additional obstacle to the many challenges that lawful permanent residents (LPRs) face on their road to U.S. citizenship — especially for low-income residents.

“The naturalization process has allowed generations of Americans to realize their dream of U.S. citizenship while expanding the nation’s diversity, growing the economy, and enriching our democracy through increased participation in the American political process. Unfortunately, fee increases of any kind can pose financial barriers for many LPRs who wish to start the naturalization process, including the more than four million Latinos eligible to become U.S. citizens.

“While the USCIS’ final fee rule retains and codifies existing fee waiver eligibility requirements, we urge the agency to make the naturalization application form available online. We appreciate that USCIS has set a lower application filing fee for online applicants (\$710) than for paper applicants, but those who file for a fee waiver or request a reduced fee cannot file online, preventing them from accessing the lower online application fee.

“Moreover, we welcome the drop in cost for the Request for a Reduced Fee (partial fee waiver) — from \$405 to \$380 — which USCIS is also expanding to a larger group of low- and moderate-income eligible LPRs.

“Despite these changes, the application for a certificate of naturalization, which is often used for children of parents who are U.S. citizens, is still too expensive at \$1,170 and will become even more expensive with the final rule raising the cost to \$1,335 (online filing) and \$1,385 (paper filing). Processing this application is often straightforward, and USCIS should further streamline it to reduce its cost.

“Finally, USCIS’ final fee rule will significantly increase the fees for other critical immigration services. These increases are, in some measure, attributed to our nation’s flawed system for financing immigration services, which requires USCIS to be funded almost entirely by fees. Congress must provide sufficient funding so USCIS can reduce backlogs and address humanitarian programs. We call on Congress to appropriate adequate funding to USCIS for these purposes in its FY 2024 budget and beyond.

“For more than 38 years, NALEO Educational Fund has remained committed to advocating for policies that make the naturalization process fair and more accessible for LPRs. The organization has also guided thousands of LPRs through the naturalization process and will review USCIS’ final rule to further assess its impact on the Latino community.

“As the April 1 implementation of the new fees approaches, we urge eligible LPRs to apply for naturalization before the fee increase goes into effect. Individuals interested in applying for U.S. citizenship can call NALEO Educational Fund’s toll-free bilingual hotline at **888-839-8682** Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET to receive vital information on every aspect of the naturalization process, including referrals to naturalization workshops in their area hosted by NALEO Educational Fund and our partner organizations.”

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**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.*