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<http://www.mysanantonio.com/local/article/Immigration-fees-increased-for-the-first-time-in-10415061.php>

**Immigration fees increased for the first time in six years**

For the first time in six years, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has increased fees for many immigration applications and petitions.

The new fees will be effective Dec. 23.

“We have been preparing our clients for this increase in fees for quite some time,” said Lisa Rivas, a Danbury immigration attorney. “Some of my clients are trying to get their forms in as soon as possible before the fee increase takes effect.”

Rivas said fees increased for two applications typically needed when a U.S. citizen petitions for permanent residency for a spouse who has entered the United States legally.

The I-485 Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status will increase from $985 to $1,140. The other application, the I-130 Petition for Alien Relative, will jump from $420 to $535.

Applicants also pay a $85 biometrics fee, which was not increased.

“When it comes to increasing immigration fees, it can prevent someone from pursuing immigration benefits,” Rivas said.

According to USCIS, the agency is almost entirely funded by fees paid by applicants and petitioners for immigration benefits. The law requires USCIS to conduct fee reviews every two years to determine the funding levels necessary to administer the nation’s immigration laws, process benefit requests and provide the infrastructure needed to support those activities.

The fees will increase by a weighted average of 21 percent for most applications and petitions. USCIS says that the increases are needed to recover the full cost of services provided by the agency.

This includes costs associated with fraud detection and national security, customer service and case processing and providing services without charge to refugee and asylum applicants and to other customers eligible for fee waivers or exemptions.

“This is our first fee increase since November 2010, and we sincerely appreciate the valuable public input we received as we prepared this final rule,” said USCIS Director León Rodríguez, in a statement.

“We are mindful of the effect fee increases have on many of the customers we serve,” he said. “That’s why we decided against raising fees as recommended after the fiscal year 2012 and 2014 fee reviews. However, as an agency dependent upon users’ fees to operate, these changes are now necessary to ensure we can continue to serve our customers effectively. We will also offer a reduced filing fee for certain naturalization applicants with limited means.”