



# Immigration Update

February 2023

## USCIS Announces Trial for Updates to the Naturalization Test

The Department of Homeland Security published a notice on December 12/2022, announcing that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) plans to conduct a trial of possible updates to the naturalization test.

This review is in response to President Biden’s Executive Order 14012, which includes a directive to review the naturalization process.

The naturalization test has four components: reading, writing, civics, and ability to speak English. USCIS subject matter experts conducted reviews of the naturalization test and recommended redesigning the speaking and civics test to improve testing standards.

Approximately 1,500 individuals will take the trial test and USCIS intends to use the results of the trial to support changes to the naturalization test.

**“We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.”**

**~ President Jimmy Carter ~**

## USCIS Issues Proposed Rule Adjusting Immigration and Naturalization

On January 3, 2023, USCIS published a Notice of Rulemaking to adjust certain immigration and naturalization benefit request fees.

USCIS receives 96% of its funding from filing fees. USCIS states the reason for adjusting these fees is to fully recover USCIS’s operating costs, reestablish and maintain timely case processing, and prevent accumulation of future case backlog. USCIS fees have remained unchanged since 2016, and a review has shown the fees fall short of recovering the full costs of USCIS operations.

The proposed fees include an increase for certain naturalization application fees. Importantly, the proposed rulemaking preserves the existing fee waiver eligibility for low-income and vulnerable populations, while also adding new fee exemptions for certain humanitarian programs.

If the proposed rule is finalized, it will decrease or minimally increase fees for more than one million low-income filers each year.

The projected revenue from the proposed rule will allow USCIS to increase the number of applications being processed, improve technology, and increase support offered to individuals seeking information from USCIS.

New proposed measures include:

- Incorporating biometrics costs into the main benefit fee and remove the separate biometric services fee;
- Establishing separate fees for each nonimmigrant classification covered by Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Workers;
- Changing the premium processing timeframe from 15 calendar days to 15 business days;
- Instituting lower fees for certain forms filed online; and
- Making no change to fee waiver requirements.

After a public comment period, USCIS will finalize the fees in response to the comments.

## USCIS Releases New Data on Reduction of Backlogs, Support of Humanitarian Missions, and Fiscal Responsibility

USCIS released its Fiscal Year 2022 progress report on December 7, 2022. This report has new information demonstrating how USCIS reduced backlogs in certain programs and supported humanitarian missions.

The steps USCIS took include:

- Strengthening is fiscal stability;
- Implementing adjudicatory efficiencies; and
- Agency-wide backlog reduction efforts.

The data demonstrates both backlog reduction and humanitarian services were successfully supported by crucial appropriations by Congress in FY 2022.

The report also shows how furlough notices, hiring freezes, and drastic cuts to contract staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic critically impacted USCIS's ability to keep up with incoming applications.

This report highlighted the need to pursue the upcoming fee schedule rule (mentioned above).

In FY 2022, USCIS also utilized more than 281,000 employment-based visas to help restore fiscal stability and overturn backlog growth. This was made possible due to the large number of unused family-sponsored visas during the pandemic.

Additionally, USCIS expanded its humanitarian mission and responded to priorities for the U.S. government, including:

- Op. Allies Welcome;
- Uniting for Ukraine; and
- The recently announced Process for Venezuelans

These programs led to the issuance of more than 92,000 work permits for Afghan nationals, the adjudication of benefits to Afghan resettlement in the U.S., and the issuance of 120,000 travel authorizations to Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members impacted by Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

## Upcoming Immigration Presentations:

### Immigration 101 in the Cowboy State

March 28, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.  
Laramie County Community College  
Open to all community members

### Family-Based Immigration Petitions

June 21, 2023, at 12:00 p.m.  
Laramie County Community College  
Open to all community members



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“Every immigration case entrusted to us represents an individual or a family seeking to build a better life in the United States. We have made measurable progress towards building a more humane immigration system thanks to the innovation and dedication of the USCIS workforce.”

~ USCIS Director, Ur M. Jaddou ~