

## USCIS Experiences Revenue Decline, Asks Congress for Loan of \$1.2 Billion

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USCIS has announced that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has suffered a steep decrease in revenue and, without assistance, might run out of funding this summer. The agency has asked Congress for \$1.2 billion in emergency relief (as a loan) along with a 10% COVID-19 surcharge (to repay the loan) on top of a proposed, but not yet implemented, fee increase.

USCIS is 96% fee funded. Its last major fee increase was in FY 2017. By late-2019, [USCIS proposed another fee increase](#), stating that without it, the agency would be underfunded by approximately \$1.3 billion per year.

The 2019 proposal called for a 21% weighted average increase. Some petitions or applications would see a fee decrease, but others (such as Form I-129 petitions and naturalization petitions) would see substantial increases. For instance, the filing fee alone for an H-1B petition would go from \$460 to \$560 (a 22% increase). An O petition would increase by 55%, to \$715, and an L petition would increase by 77%, to \$815. Naturalization application fees would increase by 83%, to \$1,170, and, for the first time, [DACA renewals and asylum application fees would be imposed](#). Due to the comments and objections USCIS has received, the proposed increase has remained pending – perhaps until now.

In addition, all of the Trump Administration's policies enacted to increase the scrutiny given to immigration applications and, ultimately, reduce the level of immigration and naturalization appear to be working. [It is reported](#) that there has been a "precipitous drop in applications for green cards, citizenship and other programs ...." Everything from the skyrocketing number of Requests for Evidence (RFEs) and denials, to the [furor over the changes in the Public Charge rule](#), to a [45% rise in processing delays](#) may have convinced some individuals and employers the new uncertainties make it pointless to apply at this time. On top of that, the heightened scrutiny and additional requirements (such as more in-person green card interviews) have forced USCIS to hire more employees that it now is having trouble supporting. In addition, USCIS [temporarily suspended all premium processing](#), thus eliminating a \$1,440 fee per petition that must usually provide a good revenue stream.

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