

ASK USCIS TO IMPROVE THE ARTIST VISA PROCESS!

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By Performing Arts Alliance

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Dear Michelle,

July 15, Washington, DC - Performing arts organizations experiencing difficulty obtaining artist visas have a new opportunity to weigh in with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as the agency proposes an across-the-board fee increase. The USCIS proposes a \$5 increase in the fee for the regular I-129 visa processing form (which would bring the fee to \$325), and a \$225 increase in the Premium Processing fee (bringing the total fee to \$1,225). The performing arts community is urging USCIS to immediately make long-overdue improvements to the regular artist visa process and to refrain from increasing the already-unaffordable Premium Processing fee. Comments to USCIS are due by July 26. The Performing Arts Alliance will submit detailed comments in collaboration with our national colleagues in the Performing Arts Visa Working Group: American Federation of Musicians, Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, League of American Orchestras, North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents, OPERA America, and Theatre Communications Group.

Please note: Until the USCIS issues a final rule regarding the proposed fee change, the filing fee for the I-129 form remains \$320 and the fee for Premium Processing Service remains \$1,000. We will inform you immediately when and if fee changes are made. In the meantime, do not adjust the fees that accompany your petition, as overpayment will result in serious delays.

Sample Message to Personalize

If your performing arts organization has recently encountered a visa challenge, please participate in the USCIS comment process. We have prepared sample comments that should be personalized with details of your organization's experience, along with some

[background information](#) you may find helpful.

Personalizing your message is extremely important. Each comment is read and documented by the agency, and "cookie cutter" messages have less impact than those including specific details. Remember to include the first line noting the DHS docket number!

Re: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2009-0033

The following comments are in response to the proposed rule to adjust the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) immigration and naturalization benefit application and petition fee schedule.

- We call upon USCIS to make immediate and long-overdue improvements to the regular visa process, including meeting the current 14-day statutory requirement for processing times of regularly-filed O and P petitions, and improving the quality of petition adjudication. Any increase in the regular processing fee must be accompanied by these improvements.
- USCIS failure to make improvements in the regular petition process has resulted in

File Comments!

Instructions:

[Click here to file comments with USCIS](#)

What's At Stake:

The Performing Arts Alliance is joining national performing arts sector colleagues in submitting detailed comments to USCIS to a proposed rule to increase fees for visa processing. The USCIS proposes a \$5 increase in the fee for the regular I-129 visa processing form (which would bring the fee to \$325), and a \$225 increase in the Premium Processing fee (bringing the total fee to \$1,225). To give greater voice to the concerns performing arts organizations have about the visa process, we encourage you to submit comments on behalf of your organization.

Comment Filing Deadline: July 26, 2010

delays and unwarranted requests for evidence or denials, which force some organizations to pay the \$1,000 Premium Processing Service (PPS) fee. This \$1,000 fee is already unaffordable -- particularly in this difficult economy -- therefore we oppose the USCIS proposal to increase the PPS fee to \$1,225. Given the harmful inefficiencies of the regular petition process, this increase in Premium Processing would impose an extreme burden on nonprofit performing arts organization petitioners.

By inviting foreign artists to perform, performing arts organizations provide American audiences the opportunity to experience a diversity of artistic talent and encourage a supportive climate for U.S. performing arts organizations to perform abroad. Arts organizations in every area of the country must rely on the U.S. visa process to be affordable, reliable, and efficient.

How to Submit Comments

Comments may be filed by the July 26 deadline through the federal government's regulation web portal. Visit the following [link](#) and follow the instructions for submitting comments, double-checking that comments are in response to "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule." [Submit Your Personalized Comments to USCIS Today!](#)