

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
RESPONSE TO PROPOSED RULE: USCIS-2021-0010

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The National Postdoctoral Association is a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the postdoctoral experience by supporting a culture of inclusive connection. Founded in 2003, our membership is composed of more than 240 U.S. research institutions and 24,000 individual postdoctoral researchers (“postdocs”). Collectively, we represent the interests of the 70,000 postdocs training across the nation in science and research fields.

We strongly encourage USCIS to phase-in evenly the visa fee increases proposed under USCIS-2021-0010 for H-1B and O-1 applicants over the course of the next five (5) years. We also ask that the proposed \$215 fee for electronic registrations remain at \$10.

International postdocs training and working in the U.S. strengthen our nation through cutting-edge innovation, leadership and community outreach across all disciplines. Thousands of these scholars use H-1B and O-1 visas to bring their expertise to U.S. educational and research institutions.

The proposed rule would raise fees for H-1B visas, one of the dominant visa types used by postdocs, from \$460 to \$760 overnight, an increase of 65 percent. In addition, the rule would impose an increase in the electronic registration fee from \$10 to \$215, creating a jump from \$470 to \$975, an increase of 107 percent (excluding asylum program fees). Raising the costs of H-1B employment visas will impose difficulty on non-profit education and research institutions across all fifty states at a time when the number of international postdocs entering the U.S. is decreasing, as tracked by the National Science Foundation.

Similarly, the O-1 visa, used by the postdoc “who possesses extraordinary ability,” would skyrocket from \$460 to \$1,055, an increase of 130 percent. The proposed increase in the electronic registration fee from \$10 to \$215 would make this rise even more dramatic, from \$470 to \$1,270, an total increase of 170 percent to the filer (excluding asylum program fees). As opposed to H-1B applicants that rely on their employers to pay visa fees, O-1 applicants often must pay visa fees themselves, a significant burden on those looking to bring their “extraordinary” scientific and research expertise from across the world to the U.S.

The NPA recognizes the self-funded nature of USCIS, understands the need for some periodic adjustments to fees, and appreciates efforts to reduce delays in visa processing times. However, these proposed exorbitant fee increases may deter both extraordinary individuals from entering the U.S. workforce as well as institutions from supporting employment-based visas that help highly-skilled postdocs transition into the U.S. workforce after their training.

Increased fees may result in highly-skilled scientists and researchers taking their experience, expertise and knowledge to nations other than the U.S, including our competitors, in detriment to our nation's growth and development. With the number of international postdocs having dropped in recent years, the proof of this burden is in the statistics.

We ask that, instead of imposing massive fee increases overnight, USCIS take a more measured approach and phase-in visa fees evenly over five (5) years to avoid a significant disruption in the U.S. scientific and research workforce. The proposed \$215 fee for electronic registrations remain at \$10 until USCIS can make a more reasonable proposal than a twenty-fold increase to early-career researchers.

On behalf of the 70,000 scientists and researchers and hundreds of universities and research institutions across the nation with postdocs, thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Kimbis, J.D.
Executive Director and CEO