

**Weather**

**Today:** Mostly sunny.

High 38, Low 18.

**Sunday:** Partly sunny.

High 38, Low 25.

Details, B8

130TH YEAR No. 67 M2 DC MD

# The Washington Post

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2007

Me

**DISTRICT &  
MARYLAND  
FINAL**

35¢

Prices may vary in areas outside the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area.

## High Cost of Citizenship

Congress must prevent exorbitant increases in citizenship fees [news story, Feb. 1].

For the first time in memory, both sides of the polarized immigration debate are in full agreement: The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' proposed increases in the fees to become a citizen are thoroughly misguided. Immigrants who have come to America in accordance with our laws, learned English, qualified to become citizens and are willing die for our country should not have such a high financial barrier placed in their path that, as Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-

Mass.) explained, would put citizenship out of reach.

Imagine elderly refugees who have fled persecution in Bosnia, Somalia or Iraq. Being unable to support themselves, they qualify for \$603 a month in federal Supplemental Security Income. The proposed new fees amount to an 80 percent increase in the cost to apply to become a citizen, from \$330 to \$595. The new fee would be just \$8 less than the amount that such people have to live on for a month. They would have no choice but to pay the fee because their SSI benefits would stop if they were not to become citi-

zens within seven years after they enter the United States.

Citizenship and Immigration Services says it needs this revenue to modernize and speed up its notoriously unreliable services, and its only option is to increase fees. Congress needs to step in and fix this mess by funding system modernization without putting this unconscionable burden on immigrants seeking to become citizens.

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