

Raoul, 18 AGs File Brief to Stop Rule Designed to Limit Immigration, Citizenship Process

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 19 attorneys general to file an amicus brief in federal district court supporting legal efforts to immediately block a new federal rule that dramatically increases fees for immigration-related applications. In some cases, the rule arbitrarily increases fees by up to 546 percent.

Under a rule implemented this summer by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the federal government — for the first time in U.S. history — will impose fees on asylum applications submitted by individuals fleeing violence and persecution. In response, a group of immigrant assistance organizations filed suit in the Northern District of California against the Department of Homeland Security and moved for an injunction to stop the fee hikes from taking effect. In their brief supporting the plaintiffs’ injunction request, Raoul the coalition highlight the chilling and potentially dangerous effects the arbitrary fee increases will have on immigrant families and the states.

“Although the new rule was published just last month, it is more of the same discriminatory, anti-immigrant policies we have unfortunately become accustomed to seeing over the last few years,” Raoul said. “I will not stop fighting for immigrant families and the important contributions they make to states such as Illinois.”

On Aug. 3, the USCIS published a final rule dramatically increasing its fee schedule for a wide range of immigration-related applications, including those submitted by individuals seeking citizenship and asylum. The rule raises fees for many crucial applications by as much as 30 to 546 percent. For instance, the application fee required to become a U.S. citizen has skyrocketed under the rule from \$640 to \$1,170 – an 83 percent increase. For qualifying family members of a victim of crime who receive a U visa, the application fee has risen astronomically from \$230 to \$1,485 – a 546 percent increase. The rule imposes these new costs while also eliminating fee waivers that have traditionally allowed low-income immigrants to become fully-integrated U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents.

Raoul and the coalition argue that in promulgating the rule, the USCIS failed to adequately justify the changes, and instead unlawfully allocated fee increases in a manner that disproportionately burdens low-income applicants. Ultimately, the rule is an unprecedented attack designed to limit access to immigration and the citizenship application process.

In the amicus brief, Raoul and the coalition assert that the rule:

Robbs states and local jurisdictions of the economic and societal contributions immigrants make, and ultimately threatens public health by limiting the accessibility of government-funded health insurance.

Frustrates state programs aimed at helping immigrants achieve financial and legal security.

Undermines the rule of law and public safety by making it more difficult for immigrant workers and victims of crimes to come forward and cooperate with law enforcement and labor agencies, including those that protect victims of domestic violence and other crimes, as well as government entities that work to combat wage theft, exploitation, and hazardous work conditions.

The case is *Immigration Legal Resource Center v. Wolf*, No. 4:20-cv-5883 (N.D. Cal.). Joining Attorney Raoul in filing the amicus brief are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.