

Speak Out to Preserve Access to Genealogy Records!

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) has recently proposed a **492% increase in fees required to access historical records** held by the **USCIS Genealogy Program**. Many of these records should already be publicly accessible. USCIS is essentially holding them hostage, demanding individuals pay exorbitant fees to access documents of our immigrant ancestors. Now is the time to make your voice heard! By **submitting a comment, you can help** prevent this unjust fee hike from becoming a reality.

All researchers should care about the issues involved, even if your research does not include these records. What can be done to one type of records can be done to others!

Summary of the Issues:

- **Access:** These fees – starting at \$240 and up to a whopping \$625 for a single file – are **beyond the means of most hobbyist researchers**, and in fact, most everyday Americans. The fees are even more inexplicable given that USCIS refers the majority of genealogy record requests to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program for processing. How can this be legal? If these requests are FOIA requests, researchers should not pay any fees other than standard FOIA fees.
- **Transparency:** USCIS proposes a raise in its two Genealogy Program fees from \$65 to \$240 and \$385, but gives virtually no explanation. These same fees tripled in 2016! How can this agency say such fees are necessary to cover costs when they do not identify nor breakdown the costs of the program? **Fee increases of 269% and 492% require an explanation;** in this regard the proposed rule is wholly inadequate.
- **Efficiency:** Why is USCIS still holding on to and charging fees for **access to records that should already be at the National Archives (NARA)**, or which already exist at NARA but are withheld from the public due to restrictions placed by USCIS? Do USCIS and NARA have any plans to transfer these historical records and make them available at NARA?
 - [Visa Files](#) and [Registry Files](#), both subject to the proposed \$625 total fee, became **eligible for transfer to NARA in April 2019**. Where are they? Does USCIS plan to collect \$625 apiece when these records should already be available to the public at NARA?
 - [Alien Registration Forms](#), subject to the proposed \$240 fee, **exist on microfilm at NARA** but remain unavailable because of a USCIS restriction.
 - **A-Files of immigrants born more than 100 years ago should be at NARA**, as per the 2009 schedule. Why must we still request A-files from USCIS for new fees of up to \$625?

What can you do? Make your voice heard in 3 easy steps:

Step 1: Review the proposed rule [here](#), and jump to the Genealogy Program section [here](#).

Step 2: Write your comments, **specifically mentioning the Genealogy Program** and addressing the issues listed here or any issue you think is important. See www.recordsnotrevenue.com/ for starters.

Step 3: Send your comments **BEFORE 10 FEBRUARY 2020** to

- [Federal e-Rulemaking Portal](#) and refer to DHS Docket No. USCIS-2019-0010 and follow instructions for submitting comments; and
- **Send** a copy of your comments to your US [Senators](#) and [Representative](#), and refer to DHS Docket No. USCIS-2019-0010. Tell them you care about preserving access to federal records!

Sign up to stay informed on this effort: <https://forms.gle/7A4addv9K4T44Hfq5> and learn more [here](#).

Amplify your voice! Please share this with genealogical societies, historical societies, and every family historian and researcher you know!