

# The New York Times

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September 26, 2009

Editorial

## A Commitment to Citizenship

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Congress requires Citizenship and Immigration Services to be self-supporting. For years, the agency languished, its ambitions and effectiveness sorely limited by the principle of economics and government known as You Get What You Pay For. Bureaucratic backlogs built up, as did frustrations. Would-be citizens spent years waiting for paperwork. Their long ordeals were compounded by a notoriously surly, inattentive bureaucracy.

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The need to properly finance America's citizenship agency — and to keep naturalization affordable — is an issue both for now and later. At some point soon, if President Obama and Congressional leaders keep their promise to pass a comprehensive immigration bill,

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But the agency is still hobbled by its fee-based revenue stream. It deserves a direct Congressional appropriation to supplement its budget so it can better withstand economic downturns, keep improving services and keep fees from rising too high for the poor and working class.

The need to properly finance America's citizenship agency — and to keep naturalization affordable — is an issue both for now and later. At some point soon, if President Obama and Congressional leaders keep their promise to pass a comprehensive immigration bill,

the agency will face a welcome but overwhelming surge of Americans-in-waiting. The machinery of citizenship needs to be ready and humming well before then, not struggling and broken.

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# The New York Times

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September 26, 2009

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