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85 NO. 17 INTERREL 1271

85 No. 17 Interpreter Releases 1271

**(Cite as: 85 No. 17 Interpreter Releases 1271)**

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Interpreter Releases Report and analysis of immigration and nationality law  
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April 21, 2008

**\*1271 4. ICE Announces Changes to SEVP, Proposes Large Fee Increases**

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has announced that it has significantly enhanced the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and that, for the first time since SEVP was launched in 2003, it is proposing to raise fees to support the improvements. The rule, which was published in the Federal Register at 73 Fed. Reg. 21260 (Apr. 21, 2008) as this Release was going to press, would double the fee for nonimmigrant students from \$100 to \$200. Most exchange visitor fees would increase from \$100 to \$180 (there is no fee for government-sponsored exchange visitors). The fee for school certification would increase from \$350 to \$1,700, and site visit charges would increase from \$230 to \$655 for each site visit. The fee for au pairs, camp counselors, and summer work/travel program participants remains unchanged at \$35. ICE states that these fee increases are necessary to comply with regulatory requirements to periodically review its fee structure and ensure that its costs are fully covered and to enhance its ability to improve national security and counter immigration fraud. Schools currently participating in the program will not be required to pay any additional fees to recertify under the new rule. The fee increases will take effect 30 days after the final fee rule is published in the Federal Register.

ICE states that an increased number of foreign students and exchange visitors has necessitated several upgrades to the program's systems and technologies and that "[d]ramatic improvements to the current SEVP program are proposed for implementation in fall 2008," including four major enhancements:

- the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the database used to track visiting students, will include improved interactive features for school administrators as well as a simplified application process for foreign students hoping to receive an education in the U.S.
- local, customized, one-on-one customer support will be provided by new field liaisons
- additional ICE agents will be assigned to follow up on alerts submitted by school administrators
- there will be a new recertification process (mandated by Congress)

Finally, ICE advises that, between the time of the announcement and the end of April 2008, it will meet with members of the academic community to highlight program improvements and explain the new fee structure. **\*1272** The first of these meetings took place in Washington, D.C. on April 11, 2008.

Interpreter Releases will provide complete coverage of the proposed rule in a future Release.

On April 11, 2008, ICE released a set of frequently asked questions and their answers (FAQs) addressing the enhancements to SEVP and the proposed fee increases. The FAQs explains that more special agents are required because ICE has been receiving increased "leads and alerts," which require more agents to investigate them. In

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the FAQs, ICE dismisses potential concern over the increased student fee, stating that it is "miniscule" in that it represents less than one half of 1% of the average tuition costs for a four-year college education and points out that, as long as students remain enrolled and in status, the fee is only required the first time that they apply. The FAQs are reproduced in Appendix II of this Release.

## **Appendix II**

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