

U.S. immigration work months behind

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Thousands of immigrants could miss voting in their first presidential election because of a 16-month logjam in processing U.S. citizenship applications. Immigration officials at the Department of Homeland Security told the Washington Post it can take longer than five months just to acknowledge receipt of applications by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or USCIS. Officials said they were expecting a surge in applications prior to a July 30 fee increase from \$410 to \$675, but the estimate fell far short of the number that flooded into the office. USCIS Associate Director Michael Aytes told the Post, "It went off the charts." Overall, USCIS received 7.7 million applications for all types of immigration benefits in 2007, up from 6.3 million last year, Aytes said. Meanwhile, Eliseo Medina, executive vice president of the 1.9 million-member Service Employees International Union, told the Post thousands of immigrants may not get to vote in next year's presidential election because of the backlog.

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