



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

September 15, 2003

H.R. 2152

A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to extend for an additional five years the special immigrant religious worker program

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on September 10, 2003

H.R. 2152 would affect federal collections and spending related to visas and services for certain immigrants, with effects on both direct spending and revenues. CBO estimates that the net effect on direct spending would not be significant in any year, and that revenues would increase by about \$2 million a year. H.R. 2152 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no significant costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 2152 would extend, through October 1, 2008, the authorization for special immigrant visas for persons who work in certain religious vocations. Under current law, such workers and their families are eligible for special immigrant visas if they apply by October 1, 2003. No more than 5,000 of these visas may be granted in each fiscal year.

Because the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) would charge a fee of \$130 for each person that applies for the special immigrant visa, we estimate that the BCIS would collect no more than \$650,000 annually in additional fees, which are recorded as offsets against the agency's spending. The agency is authorized to spend such fees without further appropriation, and we expect that most of the money would be spent in the year in which it is collected. Thus, the net impact on BCIS spending would be negligible.

Increasing the number of visas issued also would increase the amount of fees collected by the Department of State. Under current law, a fee of \$335 per person is charged by the department and deposited in the Treasury as revenue. CBO estimates that, under the bill, the Treasury would collect about \$2 million a year from such fees. In addition, depending on the type of petition, the department may charge additional fees for fingerprinting or affidavits of support. Those fees are classified as offsetting collections and are retained by the department to pay for its consular programs. CBO estimates the net budgetary effect of increases in those fees would be less than \$500,000 a year.

Finally, some of the additional immigrants could become eligible for certain federal benefits, but CBO expects that any increase in direct spending for benefit programs would not be significant.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Mark Grabowicz (for BCIS costs) and Sunita D'Monte (for State Department costs). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.