



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

June 20, 2000

S. 2406

Mother Teresa Religious Workers Act

As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on June 8, 2000

S. 2406 would affect federal collections and spending related to visas and services for certain immigrants. Enacting this legislation would affect direct spending, so pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. CBO estimates, however, that the net effect on direct spending would not be significant in any year. S. 2406 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not have a significant effect on state or local budgets. The bill would have no effect on tribal governments.

S. 2406 would extend 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, 2000. CBO estimates that making this category of visas permanent would result in about 5,000 additional visas being issued each year. This estimate is based on trends in the number of religious workers and their families who have entered the United States in recent years.

Because the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) would charge a fee of \$110 for each person that applies for the special immigrant visa, we estimate that the INS would collect about \$550,000 annually in additional fees. The INS 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 INS spending would be negligible.

Increasing the number of visas issued also would increase collections by the Department of State. Under current law, a fee of \$45 per person is deposited as an offsetting collection and is available for spending on consular affairs. CBO estimates that the State Department would collect and spend up to \$225,000 each year and that the net budgetary impact would be negligible.

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

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