

AMERICANIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS

A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Immigration to the United States has created one of the world's most successful multiethnic nations. We believe these truths constitute the distinctive characteristics of American nationality:

- American unity depends upon a widely-held belief in the principles and values embodied in the American Constitution and their fulfillment in practice: equal protection and justice under the law; freedom of speech and religion; and representative government;
- Lawfully-admitted newcomers of any ancestral nationality—without regard to race, ethnicity, or religion—truly become Americans when they give allegiance to these principles and values;
- Ethnic and religious diversity based on personal freedom is compatible with national unity; and
- The nation is strengthened when those who live in it communicate effectively with each other in English, even as many persons retain or acquire the ability to communicate in other languages.

As long as we live by these principles and help newcomers to learn and practice them, we will continue to be a nation that benefits from substantial but well-regulated immigration. We must pay attention

to our core values, as we have tried to do in our recommendations throughout this report. Then, we will continue to realize the lofty goal of *E Pluribus Unum*.¹

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AMERICANIZATION

The Commission reiterates its call for the Americanization of new immigrants, that is the cultivation of a shared commitment to the American values of liberty, democracy and equal opportunity. The U.S. has fought for the principles of individual rights and equal protection under the law, notions that now apply to all our residents. We have long recognized that immigrants are entitled to the full protection of our Constitution and laws. The U.S. also has the sovereign right to impose appropriate obligations on immigrants.

In our 1995 report to Congress, the Commission called for a new commitment to Americanization. In a public speech that same year, Barbara Jordan, our late chair, noted: “That word earned a bad reputation when it was stolen by racists and xenophobes in the 1920s. But it is our word, and we are taking it back.” Americanization is the process of integration by which immigrants become part of our communities and by which our communities and the nation learn from and adapt to their presence.

This process enhances our unity by focusing on what is important, through acknowledging that the many real differences among us as individuals do not alter our essential character as a nation.

¹ Our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, “from many, one,” was originally conceived to denote the union of the thirteen states into one nation. Throughout our history, *E Pluribus Unum* also has come to mean the vital unity of our national community founded on individual freedom and the diversity that flows from it.

This Americanization process depends on a set of expectations that the United States, which chooses to invite legal immigrants, legitimately has of newcomers. It applies equally to the expectations immigrants legitimately have of their new home.

The Commission proposes that the principles of Americanization be made more explicit through the covenant between immigrant and citizens. These principles are not mere abstractions. They can form a covenant between ourselves and immigrant newcomers. As President Johnson eloquently stated in 1965:

They came here—the exile and the stranger. . . . They made a covenant with this land. Conceived in justice, written in liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind; and it binds us still. If we keep its terms, we shall flourish.

We have not always abided by its terms, but the ideal of a covenant between immigrant and nation still captures the essence of Americanization. Immigrants become part of us, and we grow and become the stronger for having embraced them. In this spirit, the Commission sees the covenant between immigrants and ourselves as:

Voluntary. Immigration to the United States—a benefit to both citizens and immigrants—is not an entitlement and Americanization cannot be forced. We as a nation choose to admit immigrants because we find lawful immigration serves our interests in many ways. Likewise, no one requires immigrants to come here or to become citizens; they choose to come and, if they naturalize, they choose to become a part of our polity.

Mutual and reciprocal. Immigration presents mutual obligations. Immigrants must accept the obligations we impose—to obey our laws, to pay taxes, to respect other cultures and ethnic groups. At the same time, citizens incur obligations to provide an environment in which newcomers can become fully participating members of our society. We must not exclude them from our community nor bar them from the polity after admission. This obligation to immigrants by no means excuses us from our obligations to our own disadvantaged populations. To the extent that immigration poses undue burdens on our communities, our citizenry, or immigrants themselves, we have an obligation to recognize and address them.

Thus the United States assumes an obligation to those it admits, as immigrants assume an obligation to this country they chose. Having affirmatively admitted the newcomer, the federal government necessarily extends civic and societal rights. Unfortunately recent legislative changes effectively have excluded immigrants from the public safety net until such time as they become naturalized citizens. This Commission previously recommended against such action. We believe it is likely that these changes will lead to greater problems both for immigrants and for the communities in which they live. Legislation that leads immigrants to seek citizenship to protect eligibility for social benefits, rather than out of commitment to our polity, provides the wrong incentive. The effect is not to exalt citizenship, but to diminish it.

Individual, not collective. The United States is a nation founded on the proposition that each individual is born with certain rights and that the purpose of government is to secure these rights. The United States admits immigrants as individuals (or individual members of families). As long as the United States continues to emphasize the rights of

individuals over those of groups, we need not fear that the diversity brought by immigration will lead to ethnic division or disunity. Of course, the right to assemble and join with others is a fundamental right of all Americans, immigrants included. However, unlike other countries, including those from which many immigrants come, rights in the United States are not defined by ethnicity, religion, or membership in any group; nor can immigrants be denied rights because they are members of a particular ethnic, religious, or political group.

The Commission believes that the federal government should take the lead and invite states and local governments and the private sector to join in promoting Americanization. For example, “I Am an American Day” was once widely celebrated in public schools and local communities. Recent immigration legislation mandates naturalization ceremonies on the 4th of July. While the federal government cannot and should not be the sole instrument of Americanization, it can provide important leadership in supporting the implementation of programs designed to promote full integration of newcomers.

To help achieve full integration of newcomers, the Commission calls upon federal, state, and local governments to provide renewed leadership and resources to a program to promote Americanization that requires:

- Developing capacities to orient both newcomers and receiving communities;
- Educating newcomers in English language skills and our core civic values; and
- Revisiting the meaning and conferral of citizenship to ensure the integrity of the naturalization process.

The Commission recommends that the federal government take an active role in helping newcomers become self-reliant: orienting immigrants and receiving communities about their mutual rights and responsibilities, providing information they need for successful integration, and encouraging the development of local capacities to mediate when divisions occur between groups.

ORIENTATION

The Commission recommends that the federal, state, and local governments take an active role in helping newcomers become self-reliant: orienting immigrants and receiving communities as to their mutual rights and responsibilities, providing information they need for successful integration, and encouraging the development of local capacities to mediate when divisions occur between groups. Information and orientation must be provided both to immigrants and to their receiving communities. The experience of “newcomer schools” is that providing coordinated information and advice on life in the United States accelerates the integration of newcomers, which, in turn, decreases the negative impacts on communities. Information on expected impacts and successful programs can help localities foster immigrant integration and mediate differences to avoid community conflicts.

More specifically, to integrate into American society, immigrants need information on their legal rights and obligations, on American core civic beliefs, on how to access services, and on immigration-related requirements. Communities require information on the numbers and characteristics of immigrants arriving in their midst, the eligibility of newcomers for various services, the legal responsibilities of state and local government agencies, and similar matters. The Commission believes the federal government should help immigrants and local communities by:

- **Giving orientation materials to legal immigrants upon admission** that include, but are not limited to: a welcoming greeting; a brief discussion of U.S. history, law, and principles of U.S. democracy; tools to help the immigrant locate and use services for which they are eligible; and other immigration-related information and documents. All immigrants would receive the same materials. The packets would

be available in English and the main immigrant languages. It is not the Commission's intent to prescribe all parts of an orientation packet but, rather, to suggest the most important information and key resources that should be included.

Welcoming statement. The Welcoming Statement would congratulate immigrants on their decision to become permanent residents of the United States. It also would summarize the basic principles that all Americans embrace.

Example of a Welcoming Statement

Congratulations on your decision to immigrate to the United States of America. Best wishes for a successful settlement in your new home. This is a proud country of individual freedom, opportunity, and diversity with a long tradition of immigration. Finding success and opportunity in the United States can be difficult. We realize that immigrants face many challenges as they become self-reliant, such as learning a new language and adjusting to new circumstances. The U.S. has learned from its tradition of immigration that patience, tolerance, and adaptability are required from each and every one of us.

Basic American principles that you are asked to embrace include: a commitment to serve the best interests of the United States and the community in which you live; knowledge of and respect for our laws and democratic institutions; respect for freedom of speech and religion; and a commitment not to discriminate against others on the basis of nationality, race, sex, or religion. The excerpts from the U.S. history and law section of your orientation packet should serve to illustrate the meaning of these important principles.

We the people of the United States welcome you.

Example of Documents on the Founding Principles

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted a Declaration drafted by Thomas Jefferson that defined the commitment of a new nation to the principles of liberty and justice for all:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed. . . .

The greatest contradiction in the new nation's founding was the institution of human slavery, which ended only after a bloody civil war (1860-1864). After the decisive battle at Gettysburg, in 1863, Abraham Lincoln dedicated the cemetery, ending with these words:

[W]e here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

After the Civil War, the effort to live up to the promises of the founding principles intensified. In 1872, Susan B. Anthony was arrested for attempting to vote in a Presidential election. Her speech on the rights of women was an important step toward gaining women the vote:

The preamble of the federal Constitution says . . . It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not the half of ourselves and our posterity; but to the whole people —women as well as men.

Way into the twentieth century, the founding principles continue to challenge Americans. In 1963, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a peaceful March on Washington, and spoke on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the cause of civil rights.

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir: This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness . . .

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal. . . . I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character . . . And if America is to be a great nation this must become true.

U.S. history, law, and principles of democracy. This would include a brief history of the United States and of the principles listed in the welcoming statement, followed by excerpts from relevant historical documents. It would stress that American civic culture is based on a trust in ordinary people's ability to govern themselves through their elected representatives who are then accountable to the people, on the right of all members of the polity to participate in public life as equals, and on the freedom of individual members of the community to differ from each other in religion and other private matters.

Tools for settlement. This section would emphasize the development of self-reliance. It would include general information and checklists to aid immigrants in finding and using services in their community that may help them in developing economic independence.

Example of Tools for Settlement

What to expect upon immigration: information to orient newcomers on federal policies and services, such as a pre-/ post-arrival checklist on admissions, information for those adjusting status on new rights and responsibilities as permanent residents, reminder to register for military service if necessary, the role of government agencies and service providers; consumer protection and tax policies;

How to secure basic needs: information on housing, employment, education and language training, health, transportation, police and fire protection, managing finances, and cultural adjustment;

Finding assistance and advice: telephone numbers for the local information clearinghouses, government agencies; documents listing weight and measurement conversions, U.S. holidays, instructions in using the telephone and postal systems; a U.S. map;

Getting involved in the community: listings of community organizations (e.g., civic, sports, arts) and volunteer opportunities.

Immigration information and documents. This section would provide necessary immigration forms, information on naturalization, and a card for non-English-speaking immigrants to indicate their need for an interpreter.

- **Encouraging state governments to establish information clearinghouses in major immigrant receiving communities.** The Commission recommends that the federal government provide modest incentive grants to states to encourage them to establish and maintain local resources that would provide information to immigrants and local communities. For example, local information clearinghouses could provide information to immigrants on rights and responsibilities, naturalization, education and training, and the world of work. They could have materials available on tenant law and renter/landlord rights and responsibilities. They could spell out how U.S. family law (regarding marriage and prohibiting spouse and child abuse, polygamy, and female genital mutilation, etc.) may differ from other cultures. They could provide information on public life (driving, insurance, hunting/fishing licences, law enforcement, consumer protection, etc.). They could also provide information to local public and private organizations about immigrants, e.g., documentation, culture/background, eligibility status for programs, work authorization verification.

The resource centers could develop, translate and disseminate materials; foster partnerships among immigrant interest groups, ethnic churches, and service providers (advisory boards, taskforces, planning boards, coalitions); and develop volunteer networks in immigrant communities to help newly-arriving immigrants. These efforts could help reduce community tensions arising from immigration by providing accurate information and helping communities find ways to mediate these tensions. The resource centers could also

provide information on model programs implemented by businesses, service agencies, and others.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services, which already provides funding for refugee services, could administer this grant program. Each state receiving funds would designate the local structure through which the funding would be administered as part of its application for funds. Some states are likely to designate the state refugee coordinator's office, but others may designate the state education department. States had similar flexibility when they received funds under the State Legalization Impact Assistance Grant [SLIAG] program.

These already-existing structures could easily integrate the proposed services with only modest financial increments. Based on its consultations, the Commission believes that an annual appropriation of \$30-35 million would cover development of orientation materials and underwrite services in forty to fifty targeted communities. The monies should be administered flexibly, not as a formula to each state. Targeted areas should include those with historically significant numbers of immigrants as well as communities experiencing a sudden growth in immigrant arrivals. (In Garden City, Kansas, for example, the Commission observed how the arrival of new meatpacking plants changed the population from one with few foreign-born residents a decade ago to one with a sizeable immigrant component today.)

- **Promoting public/private partnerships to orient and assist immigrants in adapting to life in the United States.** The Commission previously has called for a renewed public/private partnership in the Americanization of immigrants. While the federal government makes the decisions about how many and which immigrants will be admitted to the

Project Vida in El Paso provides medical services to the Latino border community. Funded by the Presbyterian Church and public/private grants and contracts, Vida developed "one-stop shopping" for primary health care, education, housing, and other social services. It built 20 affordable rental units; and helped to generate an increase in local elementary school reading scores.

The Fannie Mae Foundation built a model public/private initiative with community-based organizations, public officials, and lenders to facilitate home ownership and naturalization for immigrants.

United States, the actual process of integration takes place in local communities. Local government, schools, businesses, religious institutions, ethnic associations, and other groups play important roles in the Americanization process.

The Commission urges the federal government to assemble leaders from the public and private sectors at the federal, state, and local levels to discuss ways to invigorate a public/private partnership to promote Americanization. The participants should include representatives of state and local educational systems, businesses, labor, local governments, and community organizations. The meeting would address ways to enhance resources for instruction in English language acquisition, civic understanding, and workplace skills. The federal grant program described above also could help promote more coordinated efforts at the local level by establishing advisory structures representing the various public and private institutions with interest in immigration matters.

EDUCATION

Education is the principal tool of Americanization. Local educational institutions have the primary responsibility for educating immigrants. However, there is a federal role in promoting and funding English language acquisition and other academic programs for both immigrant children and adults.

The Commission urges a renewed commitment to the education of immigrant children. The number of school-aged children of immigrants is growing and expected to increase dramatically. These children, mostly young, speak more than 150 different languages; many have difficulty communicating in English. They are enrolled in public schools as well as in secular and religious private schools through the country.

In addition to the problems other students have, immigrant children face particular problems in gaining an education—often because of language difficulties. The 1990 Census shows that 87 percent of immigrant children attended high school as compared to 93 percent of natives. More than one-fourth of Mexican immigrant youth between ages 15 and 17 were not in school in 1990. While some dropped out, others never “dropped in” to school in the first place.

Immigrant children often come from countries with customs, traditions, and social and governmental structures that differ from those they encounter in the U.S.; some have little or no formal education and no understanding of the American school system; some arrive with personal experiences of trauma and war; many older children come from countries where school ends at a younger age; many experience lengthy delays in being mainstreamed into regular English-speaking classes; and some do not receive appropriate-level instruction in other academic subjects while they are learning English.

Immigrant children also bring strengths to American society. For example, their native-language skills contribute to building the future multilingual workforce needed in a global economy; sharing of their cultural heritage will promote the sensitivity of that workforce as it interacts in a worldwide marketplace. Many immigrant children who enroll in school and then remain to graduate do well academically. These immigrant children are more likely than natives to prepare for, attend, and complete college.² The key, however, is helping them achieve sufficient English proficiency to be able to participate.

The Commission emphasizes that rapid acquisition of English should be the paramount goal of any immigrant language instruction pro-

² Venez, G.; Abrahamse, A. 1996. *How Immigrants Fare in U.S. Education*. Santa Monica: RAND. Rumbaut, R.G.; Cornelius, W.A. 1995. *California's Immigrant Children: Theory, Research, and Implications for Educational Policy*. San Diego: Center for U.S. Mexican Studies.

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gram. English is the most critical of basic skills for successful integration. English can be taught to children in many ways. Effective programs share certain common characteristics. Based on a review of these programs, the Commission emphasizes the need to:

- **Conduct regular evaluations of students' English competence and their ability to apply it to academic subjects.** Such evaluations will ensure placement of immigrant children into regular English-speaking classes as soon as they are prepared. Regular evaluation also will highlight strengths and weaknesses in educational programs and provide insight on improvements that are needed to ensure timely English acquisition.
- **Collect and analyze data regularly on students, their linguistic and academic performance, and the method of instruction.** Presently, federal, state, and local governments fail to collect and analyze adequate, uniform, data on bilingual and other forms of English instruction. Such failure hinders overall evaluation and the responsible allocation of government funds. A 1997 National Research Council report³ pointed out the need for new systems to support data collection and research in this area. The NRC recommended establishment of a new Department of Education Advisory Committee on Research on English-Language Learners, urged the National Center for Education Statistics to take the lead in collecting data on students and programs, and recommended that the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs take the lead in developing and evaluating programs to enhance teacher development.

³ National Research Council (August, D; Hakuta, K. eds.). 1997. *Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children: A Research Agenda*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- **Include appropriate grade-level instruction in other academic disciplines.** Coordination with teachers, curricula, and instruction outside of English acquisition will promote students' mastery of regular subject matter while they learn English.
- **Involve parents of immigrant students in their schooling.** A characteristic of many of the most successful language acquisition programs is the active involvement of parents in the education of their children. Such "family literacy" models include programs that promote frequent parent-teacher conferences and that also encourage non-English-speaking parents to enroll in English as a Second Language [ESL] programs. Some of the adult programs are offered at the local school in the evenings.

Seattle's Sharples Center teaches refugee students with limited or no English proficiency in grades six through twelve. They are grouped by English language ability, not age. Because of high demand, they usually can stay for only six months or less. The program focuses on preventing subsequent low academic performance and also preventing the high dropout rates that occur when students with limited English proficiency are mainstreamed too soon.

The Commission encourages programs that are responsive to the needs of immigrant children and an orientation to United States school systems and the community, such as we have seen in "newcomer schools." Newcomer schools must not isolate immigrant newcomers. Instead, they must be transitional and actively promote the timely integration of students into mainstream schools. Successful programs recognize the special needs of immigrant children, particularly refugees. They share information among resettlement programs and school administrators and among English acquisition and regular classroom teachers. Along with English and other academic subjects, newcomer schools teach basic school survival and living skills (such as how the local transportation system works and how to shop for food) and develop intercultural communications. Some also provide access to a wide range of support services, such as health screenings and immunizations.

The Commission recommends the revival and emphasis on instruction of all kindergarten through grade twelve students in the common civic culture that is essential to citizenship. An understanding

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San Francisco's New-comer High School was the nation's first high school devoted entirely to immigrants. Students with less than six years of education and/or poor English skills may attend for up to a year of intensive instruction based on their English ability rather than on their age. Before they are mainstreamed, students are taken to see their new school and meet their new teachers.

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of the history of the United States and the principles and practices of our government are essential for all students, immigrants and natives alike. Americanization requires a renewed emphasis on the common core of civic culture that unites individuals from many ethnic and racial groups. Civics instruction teaches students both the responsibilities and the rights of United States citizenship. Civics education also can help immigrant students turning eighteen to prepare for naturalization. The Commission recommends that local school boards institute civics programs that:

- Teach that the U.S. is united by the constitutional principles of individual rights and equal justice under the law;
- Restore the emphasis on such traditional American leaders as Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, who defined the American promise of liberty and equality for all, and incorporate other heroes and heroines, such as Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., Franklin Roosevelt, and Barbara Jordan, who expanded their promise to all Americans;
- Stress the importance of civic holidays and of American symbols and rituals, for example, the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Civics instruction in public schools should be rooted in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution—particularly the Preamble, the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Emphasizing the ideals in these documents is in no way a distortion of U.S. history. Instruction in the history of the United States, as a unique engine of human liberty notwithstanding its faults, is an indispensable foundation for solid civics training for all Americans.

The Commission emphasizes the urgent need to recruit, train, and provide support to teachers who work with immigrant students.

There is a disturbing shortage of qualified teachers for children with limited English proficiency, of teacher training programs for producing such teachers, and of other support for effective English acquisition instruction. More than 50 percent of teachers in current bilingual education programs have no formal education in teaching students with limited English skills. Teachers are often unprepared and untrained in understanding how the cultural background and experiences of immigrant children may affect their ability to learn. They need to understand that while many students quickly acquire skill in using and understanding English in social situations, acquiring academic proficiency in English takes longer.

All teachers of immigrant students—those who teach English and those who teach other academic subjects—need training to develop the most effective tools for imparting knowledge to students with limited English proficiency. Teachers also need help in understanding how best to involve immigrant parents who may themselves be limited in their command of English. Schools that have been effective in involving immigrant parents in their children’s education tend to be more effective in retaining and educating students. To promote such involvement, teachers must be sensitive to differences in language and culture that may impede an immigrant parent’s ability to participate in school activities.

The Commission supports immigrant education funding that is based on a more accurate assessment of the impact of immigration on school systems and that is adequate to alleviate these impacts.

Urban and rural schools often require federal assistance when confronted with large numbers of immigrant students. Current federal support comes through several unrelated funding streams: some is geared to particular instructional models; some is directed to address impacts of large numbers of new arrivals; however, most comes indirectly through monies targeted to schools with economically disadvantaged children who are performing poorly.

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Washington, DC's public Bell Multicultural High School offers secondary and adult day/evening intensive English classes, vocational programs, career development, dropout prevention, technical preparation, and comprehensive math and science. Bell students have high attendance rates, high advanced placement exam scores, and high rates of continuing on to higher education. Last year counselors assisted more than 30 students to become citizens. Many staff are both immigrant and multilingual and, thus, can both empathize with students' transitions and support Bell's strong native language-maintenance program.

There are costs and responsibilities for language acquisition and immigrant education programs that are not now being met. We urge the federal government to do its fair share in meeting this challenge. The long-run costs of failure in terms of dropouts and poorly-educated adults will be far larger for the nation and local communities than the costs of such programs.

More specifically, we urge the federal government to:

- **Provide flexibility in federal funding for the teaching of English to immigrant students to achieve maximum local choice of instructional model.** The federal government should not mandate any one mode of instruction (e.g., bilingual education, English as a Second Language programs, immersion). Research indicates that no one pedagogical model for English instruction works more effectively than any other. What makes for success are: the commitment of the local school system to educate its English learners; well-trained teachers who are adept at English language instruction; involvement of parents; frequent evaluation of student language acquisition; and a plan for timely placements in mainstream programs.
- **Make funding contingent on performance outcomes—that is, English language acquisition and mastery of regular academic subject matter by students served in these programs.** School systems receiving funds because of large numbers of children with limited English proficiency and immigrant children should be held to rigorous performance standards. Incentives should promote—not impede—expeditious placement in regular, English-speaking, classes.

The Commission urges the federal, state, and local governments and private institutions to enhance educational opportunities for adult

immigrants. Education for basic skills and literacy in English is the major vehicle that integrates adult immigrants into American society and participation in its civic activities. Literate adults are more likely to participate in the workforce and twice as likely to participate in our democracy. Literate adults foster literacy in their children, and parents' educational levels positively affect their children's academic performance.

According to the 1990 Census, a total of 5.8 million adults reported that they speak English "not well" or "not at all." This number continues to grow because of the entry of non-English-speaking immigrants. Researchers estimate that 600,000 adults with only limited or no English now enter the United States each year. Immigrants who are illiterate even in their native language or who have only a few years of schooling consequently are confined to employment in dead-end jobs.

Adult education is severely underfunded. Available resources are inadequate to meet the demand for adult immigrant education, particularly for English proficiency and job skills. Enrollment in adult English as a Second Language classes increased 183 percent from 1980 to 1990; neither classes nor funding have kept pace with demand. In Massachusetts, a state widely recognized for its excellent adult education programs, an estimated 11,000 of the 16,000 on the waiting list for adult basic education are waiting for ESL services.

Three principal problems impede the capacity to expand opportunities for adult education. First, funding to subsidize courses is limited. Many adult immigrants are willing and able to pay some tuition for courses, expecting a positive return on this investment. However, given average income levels of uneducated, unskilled immigrants, they are unlikely to be able to cover the total costs of adult education courses.

The Carlos Rosario Adult and Career Center in Washington DC. was for 25 years the only DC public school teaching English to adult foreigners, graduating classes as large as 650 students. Closed due to funding constraints, it reopened with private funding in a church in Chinatown. Courses are offered in computer use, nursing assistance, and GED.

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The Resources Occupational Training Program in Brooklyn, New York, a nonprofit adult vocational training program, operates as an affiliate of the Catholic Migration Office of the Diocese of Brook-lyn. Launched in 1994 with seed money from an Italian businessman, it trains and places 98 percent of its immigrant students in well-paying jobs without government assistance.

Responding to requests from its limited English-speaking employees, the United Electric Control Corporation in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1992 launched an educational and vocational skills training program. Em-ployees are given time off from work to take courses in a program that is so successful that it led to the formation of a consortium of Boston area high-technology companies to provide the same services. In this case, the program was given a jump start by a federal workplace literacy program grant.

Second, teacher training programs are limited, resulting in shortages in the number of qualified teachers. For example, in Massachusetts, there are only two training programs for teachers of ESL to adults and no Masters-level program for teachers of adult basic education. Many schools utilize volunteers to serve as tutors, but there is an insufficient number of trained teachers to provide guidance to these volunteer aides.

The third impediment relates to the general quality of adult education programs. The General Accounting Office [GAO] reported in 1995 that adult education and literacy programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education have no defined objectives, valid assessment instruments, or accurate program data.

In the early part of the twentieth century, state departments of education and local school boards played an active role in the Americanization of immigrants. They committed resources to adult education in evening and weekend classes because they recognized the importance of economic and civic incorporation into their communities. Similarly, many turn-of-the-century businesses participated in the Americanization movement, recognizing the benefits to their operations accruing from a literate, educated workforce.

There has been a shift away from this once widely-held public perception of immigrant adult education as a local responsibility, with its local community- and school-based programs. The source of funding is federal and state (as compared to kindergarten through grade twelve education that is financed primarily through local taxes). While many local school districts continue to provide classrooms and other resources, others do not. In this setting of excess demand for adult education, volunteers and low-cost options do exist. Access to relatively inexpensive classroom space often is a major impediment to program implementation. But—even though publicly-owned classroom space is often available and unused during evening and weekend hours—such limitations persist.

In recognition of the benefits they receive from immigration, the Commission urges leaders from businesses and corporations to participate in skills training, English instruction, and civics education programs for immigrants. Religious schools and institutions, charities, foundations, community organizations, public and private schools, colleges and universities also can contribute resources, facilities, and expertise. All of these sectors benefit from having skilled, English-speaking workers and residents. For example, local school systems could open schools after hours to community groups providing English instruction on a volunteer basis, and businesses could provide employees the opportunity for such classes at the jobsite. Such public/private partnerships can contribute in many ways to a greater range of educational opportunities for immigrants.

The Boeing Company and the International Association of Machinists provide training and skills development to current and laid-off workers that includes English as a Second Language and professional English development. Boeing also provided in-kind production services for a community-based organization naturalization video series in eight languages.

NATURALIZATION

Naturalization is the most important act that a legal immigrant undertakes in the process of becoming an American. Taking this step confers upon the immigrant all the rights and responsibilities of civic and political participation that the United States has to offer (except becoming President). The Commission reiterates its belief that no action should be taken that detracts from the appeal of citizenship as an opportunity to become a member of the polity. The naturalization process must be credible, and it must be accorded the formality and ceremony appropriate to its importance.

The Commission believes that the current legal requirements for naturalization are appropriate, but improvements are needed in the means used to measure that an applicant meets these requirements.

Maid Bess, a contract apparel business in Salem, Virginia provides free on-site English instruction to its refugee employees with the help of a local refugee resettlement agency. Among its more than 400 employees, 17 national and ethnic groups are represented. On its annual "International Day," all employees are encouraged to dress in the traditional costume of their native country or that of their ancestors.

To naturalize, legal immigrants must meet certain threshold requirements; these have remained remarkably consistent throughout our history. At present, to naturalize, a legal permanent residents must reside in the United States for five years (three years for spouses of

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The nonprofit Arlington Community Foundation in Virginia funds and organizes grassroots programs to assist immigrants in their transition to American society. It sponsors local community organizations, festivals, and focus groups to identify and address sources of tension between longtime residents and newcomers. It also supports local initiatives to assist immigrant entrepreneurs and parents of school-age children to understand how American institutions work. In 1995, it founded the Washington Partnership for New Americans to encourage naturalization.

U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents who serve in the military); demonstrate the ability to read, write, speak, and understand English; pass a U.S. history and civics exam; be of good moral character; and take an oath of allegiance.

With regard to the specific legal requirements, the Commission supports:

- **Maintaining requirements that legal immigrants must reside in the United States for five years (three years for spouses of U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents who serve in the military) before naturalizing.** We believe five years is adequate for immigrants to embrace, understand, and demonstrate their knowledge of the principles of American democracy.
- **Improving the mechanisms used to demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history, civics, and English competence.** The Commission believes that the tests used in naturalization should seek to determine if applicants have a meaningful knowledge of U.S. history and civics and are able to communicate in English. The current tests do not adequately assess such understanding or abilities. The civics test, for example, relies on memorization of discrete facts rather than on substantive understanding of the basic concepts of civic participation.

INS district offices vary significantly from each other in the methods by which they administer the test and in the threshold number of correct answers needed for passage. In some cases, examiners scale the tests to the perceived educational abilities of applicants. The lack of uniform standards governing whether an applicant has satisfactorily fulfilled the

requirements is disturbing. Such inconsistencies pose undue confusion for qualified legal residents and undermine public confidence in the naturalization process.

The Commission believes the tests should be standardized and aim to evaluate a common core of information to be understood by all new citizens. The U.S. history and civics test should assess whether applicants understand the basic principles of U.S. government: for example, what it means to have freedom of speech or the freedom to assemble. The English test should accurately and fairly measure an immigrant's ability to speak, read, and write; the current practice of dictating English sentences for applicants to write is not an effective means of testing English proficiency.

INS is now undertaking a full review of its interview and testing criteria, including the content and format of the English and civics portions of the test. The Commission encourages officials responsible for naturalization to consult and enlist the assistance of professional educators, pedagogical experts, and standardized test providers in the development of new history/civics and English standards and tests. Consideration should be given to separating the English reading, writing, and comprehension components from the personal interview. Often, applicants are nervous about making a mistake during the interview and demonstrate less English proficiency than they may have. This separation also would work to the advantage of those responsible for adjudicating applications as interviews would be reserved for applicants who had fulfilled the English and civics requirements, sparing scheduling and interviewing of unqualified applicants.

The Arlington County, Virginia, Wilson Center provides education and training for immigrants using federal refugee program funds for language and employment services. It offers citizenship and English as a Second Language classes (focusing on child rearing and family violence). As the school registration center for foreign-born children, it can readily inform immigrants of its services.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Company in India Hill, Illinois, learned the lengthy naturalization process was of major concern for its employees. It worked with the Chicago INS office to distribute naturalization applications and study guides to employees and provided space for officials to conduct interviews and naturalization ceremonies. A total of 400 employees and their family members became citizens.

These new standards will be meaningful only if applied equitably and there is a much greater capacity to monitor the agencies that give the tests. [See below.]

A more predictable and standardized testing process also must include consistent and rational exemptions for elderly legal permanent residents. At present English language exemptions are granted to legal permanent residents aged 50 years or older who have lived in the United States at least twenty years and to those 55 years of age who have resided in the U.S. for at least fifteen years. Special consideration on the civics component is given to naturalization applicants aged 65 or older who have resided in the U.S. for at least twenty years. The Commission supports these exemptions. However, it makes little sense to confer such exemptions on long-term legal residents, yet not on more recent elderly legal residents who have had less time to acquire English proficiency. The Commission calls for a thorough review of the current testing exemptions and urges the Congress to consider additional, narrowly-tailored exemptions to the English requirement for qualified elderly immigrants who have resided in the U.S. for fewer years than required by the current exemptions.

The Voter Education Registration and Action Program of the New England Literacy Resource Center in Boston, Massachusetts promotes adult literacy so that its students can take informed action on issues that concern them. The Center is supported by National Institute for Literacy grants under the 1991 National Literacy Act. In the November 1996 election, 467 out of 550 of the program's adult learners —85%— participated.

- **Expediting swearing-in ceremonies while maintaining their solemnity and dignity.** Approved applicants must take an oath of allegiance before U.S. citizenship is conferred upon them. Generally, the oath is administered in public ceremonies by federal judges. Most such ceremonies are solemn and dignified public affirmations of a mutual obligation that new Americans and their adopted country make to each other. However, in districts where the federal court has exercised sole jurisdiction to conduct the swearing-in cer-

emonies, long delays often result from crowded court calendars.

The Commission believes a more expeditious approach to the swearing-in ceremony should be adopted. Timely ceremonies need not sacrifice the ceremonial and traditional aspects of the ceremony that the Commission strongly believes are essential. The Commission believes the solemnity and pomp of the current judicial ceremonies should be maintained and could be enhanced by the inclusion of distinguished speakers. However, would-be citizens who have passed all requirements for naturalization should not be denied timely citizenship because of processing delays in scheduling swearing-in ceremonies.

Until 1990, the federal judiciary had sole jurisdiction to confer citizenship on an approved naturalization applicant. The Immigration Act of 1990, however, transferred authority to confer citizenship to the INS. Within one year, the Judicial Naturalization Amendments of 1991 reinstated the judiciary, albeit in a somewhat modified role. Consequently, judges who choose to exercise sole jurisdiction are granted forty-five days from notification of eligible applicants in which to perform swearing-in ceremonies. Despite the changes instituted by the 1991 Amendments, immigrants typically wait considerably longer to be sworn in as new citizens.

Such delays can have significant consequences for legal residents; they are unable to apply for particular jobs, travel abroad, vote, or receive certain benefits such as Food Stamps and Supplementary Security Income [SSI]. The Commission is concerned that as the number of newly-approved citizenship applicants increases, along with an increasing caseload

for the federal judiciary, the federal courts' capacity to perform timely ceremonies may be further hampered.

The Commission recommends that to reduce this waiting time Congress restore the Executive Branch's sole jurisdiction for naturalization. The Executive Branch should continue to work with federal judges as well as other qualified institutions and personnel, such as state courts or Immigration Judges, to ensure that swearing-in ceremonies are consistently conducted in a timely, efficient, and dignified manner. Eminent persons who would add dignity to the ceremony could be invited to participate as well. Standards of conduct should be developed for all such participants to assure, for example, that all remarks are free of partisan politics.

- **Revising the naturalization oath to make it comprehensible, solemn, and meaningful.** Taking the oath is a critical legal step in becoming a naturalized citizen. Its words convey the core meaning of becoming an American citizen. Thus, it is imperative that it be understandable by all who take it. We recommend that those naturalizing be given a written copy of the oath that they can read during the swearing-in and that they can keep as a meaningful memento. The current oath is not easy to comprehend. We believe it is not widely understood by new citizens. Its wording includes dated language, archaic form, and convoluted grammar. Although the 1952 statute does not prescribe any particular wording, it does require that the oath contain five elements: (1) support for the Constitution; (2) renunciation of prior allegiance; (3) defense of the Constitution against all

enemies, foreign and domestic; (4) true faith and allegiance; and (5) a commitment to bear arms or perform noncombatant service when required.

The Commission proposes the following revision of the oath as capturing the essence of naturalization.

***Solemnly, freely, and
without any mental reservation,
I, [name] hereby renounce under oath
[or upon affirmation]
all former political allegiances.
My sole political fidelity
and allegiance from this day forward
is to the United States of America.
I pledge to support and respect
its Constitution and laws.
Where and if lawfully required,
I further commit myself to defend them against all
enemies, foreign and domestic, either by military or
civilian service.
This I do solemnly swear [or affirm],
So help me God.⁴***

The Commission calls for urgently needed reforms to increase the efficiency and integrity of the naturalization process. The vast majority of applicants for naturalization are law-abiding immigrants who contribute to our society. The value of Americanization is eroded whenever unnecessary obstacles prevent eligible immigrants from becoming citizens. Its value also is undermined when the

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⁴ As is the case under current regulations, when applicants, by reason of religious training and belief or for other reasons of good conscience, cannot swear an oath, they may substitute “solemnly affirm” and delete “so help me God.”

process permits the abuse of our laws by naturalizing applicants who are not entitled to citizenship. For the process of Americanization to succeed, it must provide fair and timely service to legal residents applying for citizenship. It must also earn the trust and confidence of the general public.

In August 1995, the INS launched an initiative to address many of the most serious impediments to naturalization, including a backlog in excess of 300,000 persons and processing times that in larger cities approached four years. Consequently, the Service hired more than 1,000 new personnel, opened several additional branch offices, and established direct mail centers.

While these new resources resulted in record numbers of naturalizations, improprieties in granting citizenship to criminal aliens and fraud in the testing process undermined the goals of the program. It is fair to conclude that the new program revealed many of the structural and managerial weaknesses of the overall naturalization process. Subsequent Congressional hearings and independent investigations demonstrate that many of the most serious problems preceded the new initiative and were exacerbated by the increasing number of applications.

The Department of Justice [DOJ] has launched a variety of new initiatives to reengineer naturalization. DOJ named a Director for Naturalization Operations charged with overseeing management and reform of the naturalization program, including quality assurance and field operations. DOJ also contracted with Coopers and Lybrand to conduct a two-year review of the implementation and administration of the INS naturalization program.

Recognizing steps already are underway to reengineer the naturalization process, the Commission supports the following approaches:

■ **Instituting efficiencies without sacrificing quality controls.**

In the Commission's 1995 report to Congress, we recommended that the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Congress take steps to expedite the processing of naturalization applications while maintaining rigorous standards. Two years later, the naturalization process still takes too long, and previous efforts to expedite processing resulted in serious violation of the integrity of the system.

Because of failures in processing that resulted in the naturalization of ineligible applicants, new procedures subsequently were adopted to reduce inadvertent naturalization of criminal aliens. These new procedures, while not foolproof in barring criminals from naturalizing, have led to processing delays. At the same time, adequate staffing remains a problem. Congress has authorized reprogramming of funds to hire additional staff, but the Committees permitted temporary hires for most of the new positions even though the number of applications remain large. An entirely temporary workforce with short contracts lends instability to a process that already has problems. Instituting a system that has sufficient continuity of personnel and that is both credible and efficient therefore remains a pressing need.

■ **Improving the integrity and processing of fingerprints.**

Before applicants for naturalization can receive citizenship, they must submit fingerprints for FBI review to determine if the applicants have any disqualifying criminal background. Problems that delay thousands of applications have been identified in the operation of private agencies taking the fingerprints of applicants for citizenship. These problems include smudged prints and failure of applicants to sign or properly complete forms. Further, no mechanism now ex-

ists to verify accurately that the individual submitting the prints is the person whose prints are on the application.

To improve this process, the INS placed restrictions on who may qualify to offer fingerprint services. INS now accepts only fingerprints provided by Designated Fingerprint Services [DFS] trained and authorized by INS. These include local law enforcement agencies, nonprofit agencies, and fingerprint convenience stores. These restrictions may improve the quality of the prints, but do nothing to ensure that fingerprint services consistently and competently verify the identity of individuals whose prints are submitted. While law enforcement agencies have a vested interest in preserving the quality of fingerprints, they have heavy workloads and do not always give high priority to naturalization requests. Nonprofit, community-based organizations appear to take clear fingerprints, but there are questions about their competence to assess the validity of identity documents.

The Commission believes that only service providers under direct control of the federal government should be authorized to take fingerprints. If the federal government does not take fingerprints itself but instead contracts with service providers, it must screen and monitor such providers rigorously for their capacity, capability, and integrity. Failure to meet standards would result in termination of the contract.

- **Contracting with a single English and civics testing service.** The Commission urges a fundamental restructuring of the policies and procedures with which private agencies test naturalization applicants for their knowledge of English and civics.

A 1991 regulation authorized the INS to recognize the results of private for-profit and nonprofit testing services. The rationale was that private testing of civics and English would help to adjudicate citizenship applicants more expeditiously. By 1994, six organizations had been authorized by the INS to administer the citizenship exam.

Congressional hearings during the fall of 1996 revealed disturbing weaknesses in the use of private testers that undermined the integrity of the citizenship test. In response to reports that private, for-profit testing services were engaging in price gouging, cheating, and fraud, INS investigated three sites. In April and May of 1996, INS made some changes to improve testing site oversight. Local INS offices were directed to conduct unannounced inspections of citizenship-testing affiliate locations if the office did not already have an inspection plan in place. The congressional hearings revealed that private testers continued to be inadequately supervised or disciplined by either INS or their parent company.

The Commission recommends that the federal government contract with one national and respected testing service to develop and give the English and civics tests to naturalization applicants. Having one organization under contract should help the government substantially improve its oversight. Moreover, continuity with a highly-respected and nationally-recognized testing service will help ensure a high quality product.

- **Increasing professionalism.** While many naturalization staff are highly professional in carrying out their duties, reports

from district offices, congressional hearings, and complaints from naturalization applicants demonstrate continued dissatisfaction with the quality of naturalization services. The Commission believes that a culture of customer-oriented service must be developed.

Recent audits point to very high levels of noncompliance with established practices and excessive error rates even in such basic tasks as filling in the proper names and identifying numbers on forms. Mistakes pose two serious problems for the naturalization process. First, legitimate applicants for naturalization face unnecessary delays while clerical and other mistakes are corrected. Second, ineligible applicants, including felons, may be able to obtain citizenship through administrative error. While INS must pursue denaturalization of such improperly naturalized citizens vigorously within legal limits, it is difficult to reverse grants of citizenship once made. Recruitment and training of longer-term staff assigned to adjudicating applications and overseeing quality control would help overcome some of these problems.

- **Improving automation.** According to the INS, the number of naturalization applicants projected for fiscal year 1997 and each of the following few years will exceed 1.8 million. As more and more immigrants apply for naturalization and choose to become part of the American polity, there is a greater need for efficient and accurate recordkeeping. Current systems are inadequate to meet such a demand for service. Both the INS and FBI rely on paper rather than electronic files, which is inefficient and subject to permanent loss or misplacement of documents. The inability of INS to provide accurate data on the number of recently-naturalized citizens who had undergone full background investigations is a particularly glaring example of the present system's

vulnerabilities. The costs to applicants and to INS credibility are significant. The Commission is encouraged by plans to develop linkages among data sources related to naturalization. The Commission recommends continued funding for an up-to-date, advanced, electronic automation system for information entry and recordkeeping.

- **Establishing clear fee and other waiver guidelines and implementing them consistently.** Under current law, the Attorney General is authorized to grant fee waivers to naturalization applicants. The Commission has received accounts of legitimate requests being denied. The prospective increase in naturalization fees may precipitate more fee waiver requests or perhaps discourage applicants. Clear guidelines and consistent implementation are needed to ensure that *bona fide* requests are granted, while guarding against abuse.

The 1994 Immigration and Nationality Technical Corrections Act provided exceptions to the English proficiency and civics requirements for naturalization for persons with physical or developmental disabilities or with mental impairments. After extensive consideration and opportunities for public comment, the INS published its final rule in March 1997.

The new rule emphasizes medically determinable standards that promote integrity and fairness. Further, the new rule does not confer a blanket exemption. Hence, judging whether an applicant's disability would bestow a disability waiver is inherently complex.

The Commission believes that rigorous and equitable interpretation of the new rule will require that adjudicators are properly trained. Further, implementation must be strictly monitored to ensure that exceptions allowed by law are made

available to otherwise qualified legal residents. Finally, to ensure that the qualifications and procedures are understood and adhered to, the Commission recommends a thorough public education effort.