Webinar on Reducing Barriers to Citizenship: New Research and the Need for a Partial Fee Waiver

January 8, 2015 – 4pm ET / 1pm PT
During the Webinar

For technical issues with webinar system

– Call 1-800-843-9166

– For webinar link or sound questions, contact Emma Stern at estern@ilrc.org

– For all other questions contact Jacki Esposito at jacki@inspiregroupllc.com

To hear the speakers

– Call 1-800-920-7487; Conference code 26224472#
Questions During the Webinar

Chat Box:
You can enter your questions in the chat box, and instructors will answer them, if time permits.
WHERE ARE THE ELIGIBLE TO NATURALIZE

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT

IMMIGRANT PATH TO POWER

- **Undocumented**: 11,430,000
- **Legal Permanent Residents**: 13,300,000
- **Naturalized Citizens**: 18,156,000
- **Eligible for Citizenship**: 8,770,000

U.S. Citizen Children of Foreign-Born Parents
- Under 18: 17,109,000
- 33,000,000

Targeted Organizing of Immigrants + Targeted Naturalization of L.P.R.s + Targeted Voter Registration and Voter Mobilization of Naturalized Immigrants and U.S. Born Children = Immigrant Path To Power!
NURTURING NATURALIZATION: PROFILING THE ELIGIBLE TO NATURALIZE

MANUEL PASTOR, PATRICK OAKFORD AND JARED SANCHEZ
PROFILING THE ELIGIBLE TO NATURALIZE

WHY?

- High naturalization fee suggests impediment
- LPRs with less education (and likely less income) particularly impacted
- Need detailed profile on eligible LPRs to determine fee effects
- Fostering citizenship is a public good
BUT FIRST, WHAT DO WE ALREADY KNOW?

Eligible LPRs are price sensitive to naturalization costs

- Data suggests that fee increases, particularly the very significant increase in 2007, may have had a negative impact on the rate of naturalization.

- Price increases are associated with a dramatic decline in the naturalization of less-educated (and likely lower-income) immigrants.
WHY DIDN’T WE KNOW THAT ALREADY?

- Two Congressional Research Services looking (preemptively) at whether fee shifts changed the demand for overall immigration services and workload.

- Didn’t much – but it actually shift the composition of what type of services were demanded.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-90</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$110</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$185</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>$190</td>
<td>$290</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>$290</td>
<td>$365</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I-129</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$110</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$185</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>$190</td>
<td>$320</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>$320</td>
<td>$325</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>I-130</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$110</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$185</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>$190</td>
<td>$355</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>$355</td>
<td>$420</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-485</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$220</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>$255</td>
<td>$315</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>$325</td>
<td>$930</td>
<td>186%</td>
<td>$930</td>
<td>$985</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-765</td>
<td>$70</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>$120</td>
<td>$175</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>$180</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>$380</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>N-400</td>
<td>$95</td>
<td>$225</td>
<td>137%</td>
<td>$260</td>
<td>$320</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$330</td>
<td>$595</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>$595</td>
<td>$595</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: For FY 1994 to FY 2011, Congressional Research Service U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ Immigration Fees and Adjudication Costs: Proposed Adjustments, and Historical Context; for FY 2011, http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=5be73dc5cb93b210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnextchannel=5b33aca797e63110V
Figure 2. Difference in Fees Between N-400 and I-90 in $2011 (inflation-adjusted).

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
## WHY DIDN’T WE KNOW THAT ALREADY?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>N-400 Applications</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>All Other Applications</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>932,957</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,598,745</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>765,346</td>
<td>-18.0%</td>
<td>3,769,592</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>460,916</td>
<td>-39.8%</td>
<td>5,022,876</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>501,646</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>6,831,692</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>700,649</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>5,623,847</td>
<td>-17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>523,370</td>
<td>-25.3%</td>
<td>5,896,248</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>662,794</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>4,591,050</td>
<td>-22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>602,972</td>
<td>-9.0%</td>
<td>5,006,985</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>730,642</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>4,908,031</td>
<td>-2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,382,993</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>4,913,437</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>525,786</td>
<td>-62.0%</td>
<td>3,960,777</td>
<td>-19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>570,442</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>4,591,522</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Congressional Research Service
PRICE SENSITIVITY – WHEN DO PETITIONS SPIKE?

Figure 1. Petitions for Naturalizations Filed by Fiscal Years

Source: Office of Immigration Statistics
Figure 3. Applications and Number of Naturalizations for Fiscal Years.

Source: Office of Immigration Statistics
Figure 4. Number Naturalized, Data Comparison.

Source: CSII analysis of 2011 IPUMS American Community Survey data
Figure 5. Share of Naturalized by Year of Naturalization, ages 25+ at Naturalization.

Source: CSII analysis of 2011 IPUMS American Community Survey data
Figure 8. Share of Those Naturalizing Who are Mexican Origin.

Source: CSII analysis of 2011 IPUMS American Community Survey data
WHY WORRY? BENEFITS OF NATURALIZATION

- Research has demonstrated that naturalization can improve incomes and enhance civic participation

- Impact on earnings from attaining citizenship falls somewhere between 8 percent and 11 percent

- Boost in earnings associated with naturalization, with additional gains over subsequent years
BOOSTING EARNINGS

Earned Income Returns to Naturalization Over Time

- Returns, no job shifting
- Returns, with job shifting
- Mid-range estimate

Years since naturalization:
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 6
- 7 to 11
- 12 to 17
- 18 to 29
- 30 or more

Percentage returns:
- 5.6%
- 6.8%
- 8.8%
- 10.1%
- 8.6%
- 5.9%
- 7.2%
- 9.9%
- 12.4%
- 13.5%
- 12.9%
- 10.0%
- 10.0%
What are the major characteristics of eligible LPRS?

How might income status influence naturalization?

Is income associated with race/ethnic origin with limits to naturalization?
DEFINING THE ELIGIBLE TO NATURALIZE

Methodology:

- Used 2012 American Community Survey (CEPR extract)
- In approach similar to Migration Policy Institute, utilized certain characteristics and information from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to identify the undocumented (key difference is that we use a logistic regression probability analysis)
- Then calibrated final count for undocumented with estimates of Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) and Pew
### Table 1. Country of Birth of LPR Eligible to Naturalize Adult Population, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,825,670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1960</td>
<td>166,445</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-69</td>
<td>390,352</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-79</td>
<td>905,553</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-89</td>
<td>2,114,181</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-99</td>
<td>2,660,320</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2009</td>
<td>2,588,819</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Year LPR Status Obtained for the Eligible to Naturalize Adult Population, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,825,670</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2,555,338</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>361,291</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>249,765</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>442,959</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>279,797</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>293,079</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>109,070</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>244,065</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>283,233</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>256,822</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The remainder of non-citizen immigrants should be **Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)**.
- Applying the residency restrictions (five years, three if married to a U.S. citizen), we obtain a total of eligible to naturalize that matches aggregate OIS estimates as well as country distribution.
- But because we are using the 2012 American Community Survey, we can estimate individual characteristics.
Nearly two million adults eligible to naturalize LPRs within the **150% to 250% poverty band** (working poor) – representing **22 percent of all eligible to naturalize adult LPRs**

A more realistic way to understand: for the household in the middle of the 150-250% band, **the fee alone is about one week of post-tax take-home pay**

### Income Thresholds for Family of Four, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>150% of poverty</td>
<td>$35,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250% of poverty</td>
<td>$59,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 500%</td>
<td>$119,170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, Mexican-origin population is 29% of those eligible to naturalize but 40% of those below 150% of poverty level
Figure 3. Share with Less Than a High School Degree of those Eligible to Naturalize by Poverty Bands, 2012

Not surprisingly, the share of those eligible to naturalize in the lower income bands are much less educated (and have less English fluency).
The American Community Survey has year of naturalization so we take everyone who naturalized in 2011-2012 and compare them to everyone who was eligible who did not—only possible with individual answers—and we can use income breaks since income will not have changed much.

A DIRECT TEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 150%</th>
<th>150% to 250%</th>
<th>Greater than 250%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naturalized</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible but did not naturalize</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE ACTION

- USCIS asked to explore a partial fee waiver program in their next biennial fee-study

- To consider a partial waiver (e.g. 50%) in the case of applicants whose income is more than 150% and no greater than 200%

- A scaled adjustment to the fee based on a range of income levels

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MEMORANDUM FOR: León Rodriguez  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  

FROM: Jeh Charles Johnson  
Secretary  

SUBJECT: Policies to Promote and Increase Access to U.S. Citizenship

Deciding to become a U.S. citizen is an important decision in an immigrant’s life and a significant milestone in his or her journey toward full membership in our society. By deciding to naturalize, immigrants demonstrate their permanent commitment to the United States and their desire to fully integrate into the fabric of American society.

There are more than 8 million lawful permanent residents in the United States who are eligible to become citizens, but who have not yet sought to do so. The President believes U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) should explore options to promote and increase access to naturalization and to consider innovative ways to address barriers that may impede such access, including for those who lack resources to pay application fees. Accordingly, I am directing USCIS to take the steps described below.
There are slightly over 1 million adult eligible to naturalize LPRs within the 150% to 200% poverty band (working poor) – representing 12 percent of all adults eligible to naturalize LPRs.

One reasonable estimate: if the rate of naturalization for this group (150-200%) was to rise to average for immigrants with incomes above 250% of poverty level, that’s an extra 25,000 naturalizations a year.
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Further calibration between OIS data and ACS simulated data (figure to right done from OIS data in cruder way)

- Analysis of shifts in naturalizations after the fee waiver became more automatic

- Multi-year ACS pool to drive to lower levels of geography and help drive sub-state efforts
CONCLUSIONS

- There may also be a population whose income is slightly higher than that that might benefit from a fee waiver as well.

- Further research is needed both on price sensitivity and also on cost recovery.

- Working together, we can make an even stronger commitment to facilitating citizenship on the part of LPRS.
Wage increases associated with naturalization would strengthen families’ financial security and reduce poverty.

- A 10% increase in earnings would mean an extra $3,575 each year for a family of four at 150% of the poverty line.
- This is enough money to cover nearly 40% of the average annual food expenses of a four person household.
Naturalization improves the productivity of our workforce and grows the economy.

- Increased labor market mobility
- Investment in human capital
- Improved job-skills match
Naturalization benefits the children of immigrants—the next generation of American workers.

Source: Dowell Myers, Stephen Levy and John Pitkin “The Contributions of Immigrants and Their Children to the American Workforce and Jobs of the Future” (Center for American Progress, 2013)
THANKS!
Who makes up the New Americans Campaign?

*NAC partners such as IRC and NPNA also operate in many additional sites, making this one of the largest naturalization collaborations in the United States.
Increasing the use of fee waivers

Applications and Fee Waivers in the NAC
Cumulative Data

Savings to LPRs
$23.5m in Application Fees
$95.2m in Legal Fees
$118.7 million Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Apps</th>
<th>Fee Waivers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3 - 2011</td>
<td>2,861</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 - 2011</td>
<td>5,891</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1 - 2012</td>
<td>15,186</td>
<td>208</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 - 2012</td>
<td>27,709</td>
<td>1,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 - 2012</td>
<td>34,455</td>
<td>2,453</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4 - 2012</td>
<td>43,727</td>
<td>4,332</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1 - 2013</td>
<td>54,789</td>
<td>7,436</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 - 2013</td>
<td>69,709</td>
<td>12,171</td>
</tr>
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<td>Q3 - 2013</td>
<td>82,101</td>
<td>16,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 - 2013</td>
<td>92,061</td>
<td>19,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 - 2014</td>
<td>106,640</td>
<td>24,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 - 2014</td>
<td>122,410</td>
<td>29,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 - 2014</td>
<td>136,041</td>
<td>34,524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE NEW AMERICANS CAMPAIGN
PARTNERSHIPS
Agencies that administer government benefits can help with outreach and evidence.

How did we do it?

**RAISE AWARENESS**
Promote at upcoming workshops and in-house services.

**FEE WAIVER STATIONS**
Proliferate at workshops and with Citizenshipworks.

**SHARE BEST PRACTICES**
Webinars, tips, toolkits Available on the New Americans Campaign website and Ning.

**PARTNERSHIPS**
Agencies that administer government benefits can help with outreach and evidence.
Challenges remain

Discretionary adjudication

Chilling effect

Limited to 150% of FPL

Need for advocacy

Naturalization Working Group
Questions?

Melissa A. Rodgers
Director of Programs
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
New Americans Campaign
415-255-9499 ext. 763
mrodgers@ilrc.org

www.ilrc.org
www.newamericanscampaign.org
#newamericans - @nacnow
TAKE ACTION!

Tell DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson and USCIS Director Leon Rodriguez TO LOWER THE FEE!
Questions & Answers