

104TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2120

To authorize appropriations for improvements in the naturalization process.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 26, 1995

Mr. SERRANO (for himself, Mr. GUTIERREZ, and Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To authorize appropriations for improvements in the naturalization process.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Naturalization Im-
5 provements Act of 1995”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) According to the Immigration and Natu-
9 ralization Service, by April 1995, 5,300,000 adults
10 and about 700,000 children will be eligible for citi-

1 zenship. About 3,000,000 immigrants who were le-
2 galized under the Immigration Reform and Control
3 Act of 1986 will also be eligible for citizenship.

4 (2) The Immigration and Naturalization Serv-
5 ice estimates that about 338,445 naturalization
6 cases were pending at the end of fiscal year 1994.

7 (3) According to the Immigration and Natu-
8 ralization Service, applications increased 78 percent
9 from October 1994 to January 1995, compared with
10 the same period the year before. The percentage in-
11 crease in citizenship applications ranged from 9 per-
12 cent in San Antonio to 301 percent in Los Angeles.

13 (4) According to the American Immigration
14 Lawyers Association, estimates of the time it takes
15 from filing the citizenship application to being inter-
16 viewed range from 60 days to over 2 years.

17 (5) In addition to the enormous backlog in ap-
18 plications, the following are also included as barriers
19 to successfully completing the citizenship process:
20 lack of outreach and information services available
21 to the eligible population to inform potential appli-
22 cants about the benefits and legal consequences of
23 becoming a citizen; insufficient information and
24 counseling on the application process itself; and lack

1 of access to English language and citizenship prepa-
2 ration classes.

3 (6) The Immigration and Naturalization Serv-
4 ice cites lack of English language skills as the pri-
5 mary reason applicants are denied citizenship.

6 (7) There is no Federal program that is specifi-
7 cally targeted to the educational needs of immi-
8 grants wishing to naturalize.

9 (8) President Clinton's fiscal year 1996 budget
10 proposal requests \$7,000,000 for Immigration and
11 Naturalization Service's citizenship and relating op-
12 erating expenses as compared with \$1,000,000,000
13 for border enforcement and assistance to States.

14 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

15 The following is the sense of the Congress:

16 (1) The right of citizenship through naturaliza-
17 tion underlies the greatness of our Nation in the
18 same way that citizenship by birth does.

19 (2) The rights accorded by the Constitution and
20 the laws of the United States upon citizens and
21 those lawfully in the United States, as well as upon
22 those who are entitled to seek legal status under
23 current law, must not be forsaken, weakened, nor
24 compromised. Reducing rights or services for every-

1 one undermines our sense of responsibility as a de-
2 mocracy.

3 (3) Naturalization should become a national
4 priority to ensure that all residents are able to par-
5 ticipate fully in the rights and responsibilities that
6 go along with United States citizenship. It is the re-
7 sponsibility of the Federal Government to provide
8 the services necessary for naturalization.

9 (4) In order to reduce the backlog of pending
10 United States citizenship applications in Immigra-
11 tion and Naturalization Service offices across the
12 country, the Immigration and Naturalization Service
13 should increasingly privatize the administration of
14 the oral English and written civics exam. The Immi-
15 gration and Naturalization Service should determine
16 the appropriate agencies experienced in educational
17 testing to assist with this part of the naturalization
18 process.

19 (5) In order to privatize the administration of
20 the English oral and written civic exams, the Immi-
21 gration and Naturalization Service should develop a
22 national standard for each exam. The Immigration
23 and Naturalization Service should then determine
24 what the standard will consist of and how to admin-
25 ister the standard after it has been established.

1 (6) The Immigration and Naturalization Serv-
2 ice should publicize the opportunity to take the oral
3 English and written civics exams with a private
4 agency authorized by the Immigration and Natu-
5 ralization Service as an alternative to testing with
6 the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The in-
7 clusion of private agencies authorized by the Immi-
8 gration and Naturalization Service to administer the
9 English oral and written civics exams will give appli-
10 cants the opportunity to complete the naturalization
11 process with greater efficiency.

12 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

13 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Immi-
14 gration and Naturalization Service such sums as may be
15 necessary for the following:

16 (1) To restructure and streamline Immigration
17 and Naturalization Service procedures to reduce
18 delays in the naturalization process.

19 (2) To promote local level, cooperative agree-
20 ments between the Immigration and Naturalization
21 Service and community organizations and institute
22 administrative reforms to minimize delays and pro-
23 mote outreach to the immigrant community.

1 (3) To expand current services to suburbs and
2 target populations with special challenges such as
3 the elderly.

4 (4) To continue and expand collaborative ar-
5 rangements among nonprofit, government, and pri-
6 vate sector entities to deliver citizenship services (in-
7 cluding outreach and adult education classes) as ef-
8 fectively and efficiently as possible.

9 (5) To upgrade equipment and technology used
10 to report on naturalization statistics and the natu-
11 ralization application process.

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