

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1393

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to prescribe the binding oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance required to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States, to encourage and support the efforts of prospective citizens of the United States to become citizens, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 15, 2007

Mr. ALEXANDER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. CORNYN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to prescribe the binding oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance required to be naturalized as a citizen of the United States, to encourage and support the efforts of prospective citizens of the United States to become citizens, and for other purposes.

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; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the

5 “Strengthening American Citizenship Act of 2007”.

1 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
2 this Act is as follows:

See. 1. Short title; table of contents.
See. 2. Definitions.

TITLE I—LEARNING ENGLISH

Sec. 101. English fluency.
Sec. 102. Savings provision.

TITLE II—EDUCATION ABOUT THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

Sec. 201. American citizenship grant program.
Sec. 202. Funding for the Office of Citizenship.
See. 203. Restriction on use of funds.
Sec. 204. Reporting requirement.

TITLE III—CODIFYING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Sec. 301. Oath or affirmation of renunciation and allegiance.

TITLE IV—CELEBRATING NEW CITIZENS

Sec. 401. Establishment of new citizens award program.
Sec. 402. Naturalization ceremonies.

3 SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

4 In this Act:

5 (1) OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.—The term “Oath
6 of Allegiance” means the binding oath (or affirmation)
7 of allegiance required to be naturalized as a
8 citizen of the United States, as prescribed in sub-
9 section (e) of section 337 of the Immigration and
10 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1448(e)), as added by sec-
11 tion 301(a)(2).

12 (2) SECRETARY.—Except as otherwise provided,
13 the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Home-
14 land Security.

1 TITLE I—LEARNING ENGLISH

2 SEC. 101. ENGLISH FLUENCY.

3 (a) EDUCATION GRANTS.—

22 (3) APPLICATION.—A lawful permanent resi-
23 dent desiring a grant under this subsection shall
24 submit an application to the Chief at such time, in

1 such manner, and accompanied by such information
2 as the Chief may reasonably require.

3 (4) PRIORITY.—If insufficient funds are avail-
4 able to award grants to all qualified applicants, the
5 Chief shall give priority based on the financial need
6 of the applicants.

7 (5) NOTICE.—The Secretary, upon relevant reg-
8 istration of a lawful permanent resident with the
9 Department of Homeland Security, shall notify such
10 lawful permanent resident of the availability of
11 grants under this subsection for lawful permanent
12 residents who declare an intent to apply for United
13 States citizenship.

14 (b) FASTER CITIZENSHIP FOR ENGLISH FLUENCY.—
15 Section 316 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
16 U.S.C. 1427) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
17 lowing:

18 “(g) A lawful permanent resident of the United
19 States who demonstrates English fluency, in accordance
20 with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Homeland
21 Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, will
22 satisfy the residency requirement under subsection (a)
23 upon the completion of 4 years of continuous legal resi-
24 dency in the United States.”.

1 **SEC. 102. SAVINGS PROVISION.**

2 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

3 (1) modify the English language requirements
4 for naturalization under section 312(a)(1) of the Im-
5 migration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
6 1423(a)(1)); or

7 (2) influence the naturalization test redesign
8 process of the Office of Citizenship of the United
9 States Citizenship and Immigration Services (except
10 for the requirement under section 301(b)).

11 **TITLE II—EDUCATION ABOUT
12 THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE**

13 **SEC. 201. AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP GRANT PROGRAM.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a
15 competitive grant program to provide financial assistance
16 for—

17 (1) efforts by entities (including veterans and
18 patriotic organizations) certified by the Office of
19 Citizenship of the Department of Homeland Security
20 to promote the patriotic integration of prospective
21 citizens into the American way of life by providing
22 civics, history, and English as a second language
23 courses, with a specific emphasis on attachment to
24 principles of the Constitution of the United States,
25 the heroes of American history (including military

1 heroes), and the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance;
2 and

3 (2) other activities approved by the Secretary to
4 promote the patriotic integration of prospective citizens
5 and the implementation of the Immigration and
6 Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.), including
7 grants—

8 (A) to promote an understanding of the
9 form of government and history of the United
10 States; and

11 (B) to promote an attachment to the principles
12 of the Constitution of the United States
13 and the well being and happiness of the people
14 of the United States.

15 (b) ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS.—The Secretary may accept and use gifts from the United States Citizenship
16 Foundation, established under section 202(a), for grants
17 under this section.

19 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
21 necessary to carry out this section.

22 **SEC. 202. FUNDING FOR THE OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP.**

23 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary, acting through
24 the Director of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration
25 Services, is authorized to establish the United States Citi-

1 zenship Foundation (referred to in this section as the
2 “Foundation”), an organization duly incorporated in the
3 District of Columbia, exclusively for charitable and edu-
4 cational purposes to support the functions of the Office
5 of Citizenship, which shall include the patriotic integration
6 of prospective citizens into—

14 (b) DEDICATED FUNDING.—

22 (A) American common values and tradi-
23 tions, including an understanding of American
24 history and the principles of the Constitution of
25 the United States; and

5 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
6 Congress that dedicating increased funds to the Of-
7 fice of Citizenship should not result in an increase
8 in fees charged by the Bureau of Citizenship and
9 Immigration Services.

10 (c) GIFTS.—

15 (2) FROM FOUNDATION.—The Office of Citizen-
16 ship may accept gifts from the Foundation to sup-
17 port the functions of the Office.

18 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
19 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be
20 necessary to carry out the mission of the Office of Citizen-
21 ship, including the patriotic integration of prospective citi-
22 zens into—

23 (1) American common values and traditions, in-
24 cluding an understanding of American history and

1 the principles of the Constitution of the United
2 States; and

3 (2) civic traditions of the United States, includ-
4 ing the Pledge of Allegiance, respect for the flag of
5 the United States, and voting in public elections.

6 **SEC. 203. RESTRICTION ON USE OF FUNDS.**

7 Amounts appropriated to carry out a program under
8 this title may not be used to organize individuals for the
9 purpose of political activism or advocacy.

10 **SEC. 204. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**

11 The Chief of the Office of Citizenship shall submit
12 to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pen-
13 sions and the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate,
14 and the Committee on Education and the Workforce and
15 the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Rep-
16 resentatives, an annual report that contains—

17 (1) a list of the entities that have received
18 funds from the Office of Citizenship during the re-
19 porting period under this title and the amount of
20 funding received by each such entity;

21 (2) an evaluation of the extent to which grants
22 received under this title and title I successfully pro-
23 moted an understanding of—

24 (A) the English language; and

6 (3) information about the number of lawful per-
7 manent residents who were able to achieve the
8 knowledge described under paragraph (2) as a result
9 of the grants provided under this title and title I.

10 **TITLE III—CODIFYING THE OATH** 11 **OF ALLEGIANCE**

12 SEC. 301. OATH OR AFFIRMATION OF RENUNCIATION AND
13 ALLEGIANCE.

14 (a) REVISION OF OATH.—Section 337 of the Immig-
15 ration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1448) is amend-
16 ed—

22 (2) by adding at the end the following:

23 “(e)(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the oath

24 (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed in this subsection

25 is as follows: ‘I take this oath solemnly, freely, and without

1 any mental reservation. I absolutely and entirely renounce
2 all allegiance to any foreign state or power of which I have
3 been a subject or citizen. My fidelity and allegiance from
4 this day forward are to the United States of America. I
5 will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and
6 laws of the United States, and will support and defend
7 them against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I will bear
8 arms, or perform noncombatant military or civilian serv-
9 ice, on behalf of the United States when required by law.
10 This I do solemnly swear, so help me God.'

11 "(2) If a person, by reason of religious training and
12 belief (or individual interpretation thereof) or for other
13 reasons of good conscience, cannot take the oath pre-
14 scribed in paragraph (1)—

15 "(A) with the term 'oath' included, the term
16 'affirmation' shall be substituted for the term 'oath';
17 and

18 "(B) with the phrase 'so help me God' included,
19 the phrase 'so help me God' shall be omitted.

20 "(3) If a person shows by clear and convincing evi-
21 dence to the satisfaction of the Attorney General that such
22 person, by reason of religious training and belief, cannot
23 take the oath prescribed in paragraph (1)—

24 "(A) because such person is opposed to the
25 bearing of arms in the Armed Forces of the United

1 States, the words 'bear arms, or' shall be omitted;
2 and

3 "(B) because such person is opposed to any
4 type of service in the Armed Forces of the United
5 States, the words 'bear arms, or' and 'noncombatant
6 military or' shall be omitted.

7 "(4) As used in this subsection, the term 'religious
8 training and belief'—

9 "(A) means a belief of an individual in relation
10 to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to
11 those arising from any human relation; and

12 "(B) does not include essentially political, socio-
13 logical, or philosophical views or a merely personal
14 moral code.

15 "(5) Any reference in this title to 'oath' or 'oath of
16 allegiance' under this section shall be deemed to refer to
17 the oath (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed under
18 this subsection.".

19 (b) HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT TEST.—The Sec-
20 retary shall incorporate a knowledge and understanding
21 of the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance into the history
22 and government test given to applicants for citizenship.

23 (c) NOTICE TO FOREIGN EMBASSIES.—Upon the
24 naturalization of a new citizen, the Secretary, in coopera-
25 tion with the Secretary of State, shall notify the embassy

1 of the country of which the new citizen was a citizen or
2 subject that such citizen has—

3 (1) renounced allegiance to that foreign coun-

4 try; and

5 (2) sworn allegiance to the United States.

6 (d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
7 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 6
8 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

9 **TITLE IV—CELEBRATING NEW 10 CITIZENS**

11 **SEC. 401. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CITIZENS AWARD PRO- 12 GRAM.**

13 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a new
14 citizens award program to recognize citizens who—

15 (1) have made an outstanding contribution to
16 the United States; and

17 (2) are naturalized during the 10-year period
18 ending on the date of such recognition.

19 (b) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The President is authorized
21 to present a medal, in recognition of outstanding
22 contributions to the United States, to citizens de-
23 scribed in subsection (a).

4 (c) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—The Secretary of the
5 Treasury shall strike a medal with suitable emblems, de-
6 vices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the President.

7 (d) NATIONAL MEDALS.—The medals struck pursu-
8 ant to this section are national medals for purposes of
9 chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

10 SEC. 402. NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES.

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation
12 with the Director of the National Park Service, the Archi-
13 vist of the United States, and other appropriate Federal
14 officials, shall develop and implement a strategy to en-
15 hance the public awareness of naturalization ceremonies.

16 (b) VENUES.—In developing the strategy under this
17 section, the Secretary shall consider the use of outstanding
18 and historic locations as venues for select naturalization
19 ceremonies.

20 (c) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall
21 annually submit a report to Congress that contains—

22 (1) the content of the strategy developed under
23 this section; and

1 (2) the progress made towards the implementa-
2 tion of such strategy.

