

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:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
 Sec. 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.
 Sec. 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 affirma-
 7 tion) 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.—

4 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Chief of the Office
5 of Citizenship of the Department of Homeland Secu-
6 rity (referred to in this subsection as the “Chief”)
7 shall establish a grant program to provide grants in
8 an amount not to exceed \$500 to assist lawful per-
9 manent residents of the United States who declare
10 an intent to apply for citizenship in the United
11 States to meet the requirements under section 312
12 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
13 1423).

14 (2) USE OF FUNDS.—Grant funds awarded
15 under this subsection shall be paid directly to an ac-
16 credited institution of higher education or other
17 qualified educational institution (as determined by
18 the Chief) for tuition, fees, books, and other edu-
19 cational resources required by a course on the
20 English language in which the lawful permanent
21 resident is enrolled.

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 citi-
 5 zens 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 prin-
 12 ciples 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 ac-
 16 cept and use gifts from the United States Citizenship
 17 Foundation, established under section 202(a), for grants
 18 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—

7 (1) American common values and traditions, in-
 8 cluding an understanding of the history of the
 9 United States and the principles of the Constitution
 10 of the United States; and

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

14 (b) DEDICATED FUNDING.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 1.5 percent of
 16 the funds made available to the Bureau of Citizen-
 17 ship and Immigration Services (including fees and
 18 appropriated funds) shall be dedicated to the func-
 19 tions of the Office of Citizenship, which shall include
 20 the patriotic integration of prospective citizens
 21 into—

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

1 (B) civic traditions of the United States,
2 including the Pledge of Allegiance, respect for
3 the flag of the United States, and voting in
4 public elections.

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.—

11 (1) TO FOUNDATION.—The Foundation may so-
12 licit, accept, and make gifts of money and other
13 property in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the
14 Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

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

(B) American history and government, including the heroes of American history, the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance, and an attachment to the principles of the Constitution of the United States; and

(3) information about the number of lawful permanent residents who were able to achieve the knowledge described under paragraph (2) as a result of the grants provided under this title and title I.

TITLE III—CODIFYING THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

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

(a) REVISION OF OATH.—Section 337 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1448) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “under section 310(b) an oath” and all that follows through “personal moral code.” and inserting “under section 310(b), the oath (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed in subsection (e).”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(e)(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the oath (or affirmation) of allegiance prescribed in this subsection 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).

1 (2) MAXIMUM NUMBER OF AWARDS.—Not more
2 than 10 citizens may receive a medal under this sec-
3 tion in any calendar year.

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.

