



NEWS RELEASE

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

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White House Task Force on New Americans Releases Recommendations

Proposed plan strong step towards making naturalization more accessible for nation's 8.7 million eligible legal permanent residents

Washington, D.C. – Today, the White House Task Force on New Americans outlined the federal government's goals to strengthen its integration efforts nationwide and build welcoming communities. The Task Force, which is a formal interagency body created by President Obama in November 2014, is comprised of representatives from sixteen federal departments, agencies, and White House offices.

Led by Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and León Rodríguez, Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Task Force aims to further strengthen the federal government's integration efforts by making them more strategic and deliberate.

“Nearly 9 million legal permanent residents are eligible to take the next step and become U.S. citizens,” stated Arturo Vargas, NALEO Educational Fund Executive Director. “Unfortunately, cost and accessibility can be very real barriers for many potential new citizens and their families. The plan set forth by the Task Force on New Americans is a positive first step in making the naturalization process more accessible for eligible legal permanents who are ready to become full contributors to our nation's rich economic and civic life.”

Vargas went on to say, “We look forward to continuing to work with the Task Force on implementation of these goals and increased efforts to make the cost of naturalization more manageable for immigrants and their families.”

The plan includes many of the recommendations proposed by NALEO Educational Fund and the Naturalization Working Group in letters sent to the Task Force on February 9. The Naturalization Working Group, which is co-coordinated by NALEO Educational Fund and the National Immigration Forum, is made up of national and local organizations committed to helping legal permanent residents become American citizens. Copies of those letters can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Notable goals announced by the Task Force include the following:

- **Identify Opportunities to Inform Individuals Eligible for Naturalization:** USCIS will notify permanent residents about their potential eligibility for naturalization. This will include leveraging its existing case status and e-filing tools to notify permanent residents seeking to renew or replace a permanent resident card about potential eligibility for naturalization.
- **Expand Citizenship Outreach Partnerships:** Over the past five years, USCIS has increased efforts to coordinate with cities and public libraries to provide information about citizenship in local communities. In 2015, USCIS will double the number of formal letters of agreement with local governments and seek out additional opportunities to expand these local partnerships.
- **Citizenship Public Awareness Campaign:** Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will launch a national, multilingual media campaign to raise awareness about the rights, responsibilities, and importance of U.S. citizenship, and available citizenship preparation tools.
- **Increasing Mobile Immigration Services:** USCIS will assess the feasibility of providing mobile services where underserved populations are located and will partner with federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), that have footprints in rural and other underserved communities.
- **Highlight Promising Practices and Resources for Serving English Learners (ELs):** U.S. Department of Education will highlight effective, evidence-based interventions for ELs and new Americans, for use in federal programs such as the existing program for immigrant children under Title III. These interventions should include professional development for educators to meet the unique needs of new Americans and ELs as a whole.

In addition to working with the Task Force on New Americans, NALEO Educational Fund will continue its citizenship promotion efforts by hosting hundreds of citizenship workshops nationwide and operating its toll-free bilingual hotline 1-888-839-8682 and yaeshora.info website to provide potential new citizens with vital information on every aspect of the naturalization process. Individuals with questions can call the hotline to speak with a live operator regarding any aspect of the naturalization process and their eligibility for citizenship. NALEO Educational Fund also will continue to expand this work in partnership with the multi-ethnic and multi-faceted New Americans Campaign.

Media Note: Spokespersons are available to discuss the Task Force recommendations and the organization's ongoing citizenship efforts. For interview requests, please contact Amanda Bosquez (abosquez@naleo.org, 202-546-2536) or Paula Valle Castanon (pvalle@naleo.org, 213-747-7606 ext. 4414).

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.