



Many Nationalities – One Nation

A proposal for a White House Office of New Americans Integration

The US now has the highest number of immigrants and their children of any time in our history.

- The US is home to 38 million foreign-born, and at least 34 million of their US-born children.
- These 72 million foreign born and their children represent 24% of the U.S. population.
- Six out of seven of the immigrants and their children (85%) are here legally.
- Two-thirds of the immigrants and their children (67%) are US citizens, either naturalized or born here.

The American public is ambivalent on immigrants and immigration.

- 63% of those polled agree that “pressing 1 for English” shows the US “caters too much” to Latinos, and 43% worry that “America is becoming too Hispanic”.
- At the same time, 59% of Americans believe the tone of the immigration debates has become “too negative”, and 67% say “immigration is good for America”.

The large number of immigrants and their children creates real challenges.

- 32.0% of adult immigrants have less than a high school education.
- Twenty-four million Americans (including 4.5 million born in the US) have difficulty speaking English.
- Under the Bush administration the cost of US citizenship has increased 170% and the numbers of people becoming citizens dropped 56% in the last year; currently 8.5 million legal immigrants are eligible for US citizenship but have not taken that step.

Good immigrant integration strategy:

- Empowers immigrants to succeed in the US (rather than punishes them with “English Only” measures).
- Promotes stronger, more cohesive communities and national security.
- Prepares our workforce and ensures global competitiveness.

The United States currently has no national strategy for immigrant integration.

- No fewer than three different Cabinet departments handle different aspects of immigration policy (Homeland Security, State, and Justice).
- Other aspects of immigrant integration are covered by HHS, Education, Labor, and HUD.

Proposal:

Create a White House Office of New Americans Integration to encourage English, U.S. citizenship, and full integration into American society.

The new President and Executive Branch should drive a national strategy for immigrant integration so that our many nationalities are one nation, for the benefit of all.



A White House Office for New Americans Integration that can articulate and move a clear integration policy is good policy and good politics:

- Such an integration policy would address head-on the changing demographics of the U.S. and the challenges it brings, but through a positive framework of national unity.
- It also focuses attention on the overwhelming majority of immigrants and their children who are here legally, provides practical solutions that benefit all, and enjoys wide immigrant, business, and popular support.

States, cities, and policy organizations have innovated on immigrant integration strategy.

- Illinois, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts, and Maryland have New Americans Executive Orders, and Virginia has set up an immigration commission.
- The Brookings Institution, Migration Policy Institute, and National League of Cities all have immigrant integration projects.

Key strategies for immigrant integration, popular with immigrants and the wider public, include:

- **Promoting U.S. citizenship:** Legal immigrants WANT become American citizens and vote. Current policies have turned US citizenship into a “Gold Card Privilege” available only to the wealthy and educated elite. As a US Senator, President-Elect Obama was the lead sponsor on the *Citizenship Promotion Act*.
- **Enabling immigrants to learn English:** Immigrant adults WANT to learn English in practical ways that will allow them to advance on the job, talk to their neighbors, and assist their children in school. Immigrants who speak English well earn twice what those who speak no English. Immigrants need better access to English classes, especially tied to practical workforce skills. Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton is the lead Senate sponsor of the *Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act of 2008*.
- **Employing the skills and technical expertise that immigrants bring:** Adult immigrants often arrive with substantial investments by their native lands in their education and training, but cannot use those skills to assist the US economy.
- **Teaching children English early:** The easiest point at which to learn a language well is at a young age. Intensive English for pre-schoolers will allow these children to succeed in their education.
- **Encouraging dual language learning for children:** Immigrant and native parents alike understand the importance of their children learning multiple languages. Dual-language programs enable the children of immigrants to learn both English and the language of their parents (such as Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, and Arabic) while also preparing all children for the globally competitive marketplace.
- **Unleashing entrepreneurship:** The entrepreneurial initiative of immigrants is legendary. Intentionally including them in economic and business development programs offered by the federal, state, and local governments is good common sense.

Endorsed by the Center for Community Change/ Fair Immigration Reform Movement, CASA of Maryland, CAUSA/PCUN (Oregon), Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), Florida Immigrant Coalition, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC), New York Immigration Coalition, OneAmerica, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)