



# U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## Office of Citizenship

**Presentation to a Joint Meeting of the  
Americanism and Children & Youth Commissions  
92nd National Convention of the American Legion  
Milwaukee, WI • August 28, 2010**

# About the Office of Citizenship

## Establishment and Mission

Created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Office of Citizenship:

- Promotes instruction and training on citizenship rights and responsibilities.
- Provides immigrants with information and tools necessary to successfully integrate into American civic culture.



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# About the Office of Citizenship

## Strategic Goals

With access to immigrants at all stages of the immigration process, the Office of Citizenship:

- Provides immigrants with opportunities and tools to become vested citizens.
- Builds community capacity to prepare immigrants for citizenship.
- Promotes dialogue and collaboration on integration and raises awareness of its importance to society.



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# Strategic Framework for Integration

## American Identity Based on Shared Civic Values

- Americans are united not by race, religion, or creed, but by shared civic ideals, an appreciation of our history, and a common language.
- Our shared civic values include:
  - Equality before the law;
  - Respect and tolerance for difference;
  - Freedom of speech and religion;
  - Representative government.



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# Strategic Framework for Integration

## Integration is a Two-way Street

- Immigrants must be able to both feel and perceive themselves as fully American
- Receiving communities must also perceive immigrants as fully American
- Three elements facilitate integration:
  - Learning English
  - Embracing our shared history
  - Identifying with our shared civic values



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# Strategic Framework for Integration

## Importance of Civic Integration

- The successful civic integration of new immigrants is paramount to the mission of the Office of Citizenship. Success in this area will:
  - Continue America's tradition as a welcoming nation;
  - Foster resilient communities; and
  - Prevent marginalization.
- The Office of Citizenship aims to help immigrants develop a sense of membership and social belonging in America.



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# Why is Integration Important Today?

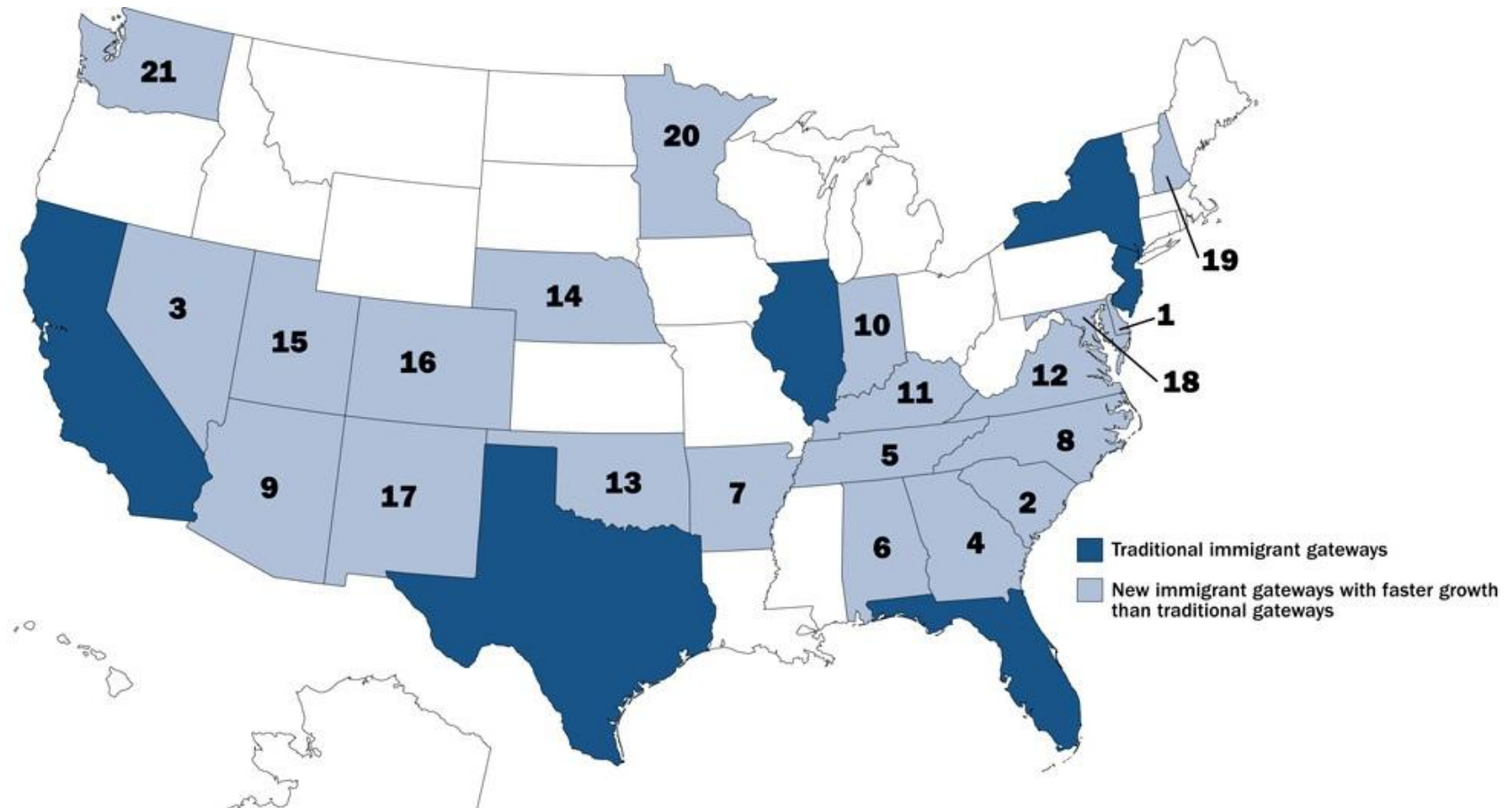
## Immigration Trends

1. **LARGEST WAVE:** The U.S. is receiving its largest wave of immigrants. The foreign-born population is expected to grow from 12.5% (38 million) currently to 19% (83 million) by 2050.
2. **NEW PLACES:** Immigrants are now settling in “New Gateways” (e.g. North Carolina, Nevada, Georgia) that have limited experience providing for the needs of diverse immigrant populations.
3. **NEW COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN:** Over 80% of immigrants now come from outside Europe (e.g. Mexico, India, China).



# Why is Integration Important Today?

## Immigrant Settlement Patterns



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# Why is Integration Important Today?

## Recent Immigrant Flow

On average, the U.S. welcomes approximately one million permanent residents and more than 650,000 new citizens each year.

Year	Asylees	Refugees	Permanent Residents	Naturalized Citizens
FY 2009	22,119	74,602	1,130,818	743,715
FY 2008	22,838	60,107	1,107,126	1,046,539
FY 2007	25,131	48,218	1,052,415	660,477



# Renewed Focus on Integration

## Federal Call to Action

Several federal reports have highlighted the need to build an “Americanization” movement for the twenty-first century.

- **U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform (1997)**

Called for a modern-day Americanization movement based on American unity through a shared understanding and practice of the values enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, as well as an emphasis on communication in a common language.

- **Task Force on New Americans (2008)**

Recognized that citizenship is an identity and not simply a benefit and emphasized the need for a national effort to promote immigrant integration involving all sectors of society.



# Support for Civic Organizations

## Promoting Service and Attachment to the United States

- The Office of Citizenship recognizes the need to expand the number of community groups working with immigrants.
- Civic organizations like the American Legion have strong networks of volunteers who share an ethic of service and an interest in patriotic and national causes.
- The American Legion can strengthen its citizenship education programs by helping immigrants prepare for citizenship and learn more about the United States—building and preparing future citizens.



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# Support for Civic Organizations

## American Legion Post 29 – Marietta, Georgia

- Marietta, GA Post 29 was selected as an initial site in 2009 by American Legion HQ and the Office of Citizenship.
- Post 29 received basic training on the citizenship process, the naturalization test, and available resources for volunteers.
- Held a citizenship preparation class with USCIS assistance in December 2009.
- More than 30 local immigrants attended and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution covered the event.



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# Support for Civic Organizations

## Next Steps: Specific Ideas for the American Legion

- Host a naturalization ceremony in partnership with a local USCIS office.
- Hold a citizenship information session.
- Partner with local community organizations, libraries, or other groups to teach joint citizenship or English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.
- Provide volunteer opportunities to new citizens or permanent residents to help them learn about their community and their new country.



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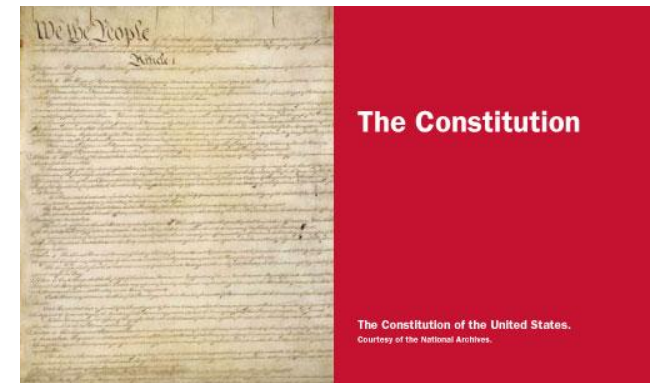
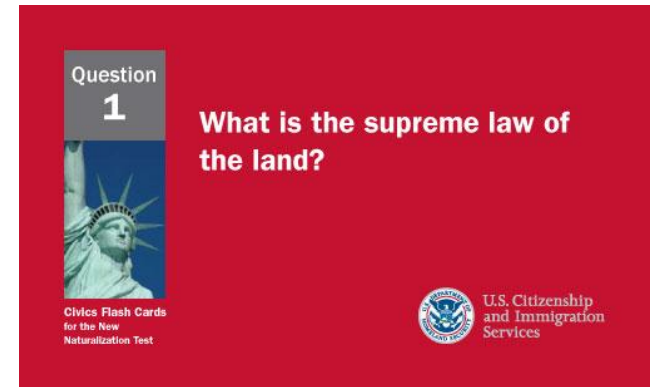
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# Support for Civic Organizations

## Next Steps: Specific Ideas for the American Legion

The Office of Citizenship can offer:

- Study materials and free resources to use in citizenship or ESL programs
- Basic training on the citizenship process and the naturalization test
- Access to USCIS's network of community organizations
- Technical assistance on naturalization requirements and citizenship topics



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# Support for Civic Organizations

## Next Steps: Specific Ideas for the American Legion

- Register for a free copy of the *Civics and Citizenship Toolkit* at [www.citizenshiptoolkit.gov](http://www.citizenshiptoolkit.gov).
- Attend a free training workshop for educators and volunteers. See [www.uscis.gov/teachertraining](http://www.uscis.gov/teachertraining) for a schedule of upcoming events.
- Consider applying for funding under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. See [www.uscis.gov/grants](http://www.uscis.gov/grants) for more information.



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*Celebrate Citizenship,  
Celebrate America*

For more information, visit  
[www.uscis.gov/citizenship](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship)



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