



105 Chauncy St. #901
Boston, MA 02111

www.miracoalition.org
Voice: 617.350.5480
Fax: 617.350.5499

Invest in Our Workforce, Invest in Massachusetts
Level-Fund Citizenship Services for New Americans (Line Item 4003-0122)
at \$650,000 in the FY10 Senate Budget

Governor's House 1 Budget: \$580,000

House Final Budget: \$500,000

How do Citizenship Services Save the State Money?

- If 200 to 300 elder or disabled legal permanent residents currently receiving EAEDC cash assistance successfully naturalize through the program during FY2010 and become eligible for federal cash assistance, the annualized savings to the Commonwealth will pay for the line item.

What is the issue?

In Massachusetts there are over 300,000 legal immigrants eligible for, or in the process of, naturalization to become U.S. citizens. Yet there is limited funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, civics classes and services for immigrants in the naturalization process, a journey that can take anywhere from 5 to 15 years. In fact, over 15,000 people are on waiting lists to access ESOL classes in the state. **As of March 2009, more than 6,500 people had been served and more than 1,000 people had naturalized since the beginning of the program in FY 07.** However, the need is much greater given the number of immigrants eligible to apply for naturalization, the complexity of the naturalization exam, and the recent increase in the application fees. The FY 09 budget originally included \$650,000 for citizenship services that was distributed by the MA Office for Refugees and Immigrants to 13 groups across the Commonwealth, but the program suffered a 9C cut of over \$40,000 in the initial round of cuts. The House 1 budget, released on January 28th by the Governor, included \$580,000 and the Final House Budget included \$500,000.

Why should we help the immigrants of Massachusetts to become citizens?

It's good for the workforce.

Seventeen percent of our workforce is immigrants and without new immigrant workers, the state's labor force would have shrunk. Investing in immigrants is investing in our workforce. When immigrants become citizens, they are more likely to stay in MA and draw more businesses and industry to the state, including federal contracts. Likewise, when people learn English and become naturalized, their earning potential increases, as do the taxes they pay.

It's good for politics.

More classes to help people become citizens mean more civic participation and, ultimately, more voters who want to stay in MA. If immigrants stay in the Commonwealth, the state will be less likely to lose a Congressional seat due to population decline. The loss of a Congressional seat would mean less federal funding for housing, transportation, and other programs.

What is the Citizenship for New Americans Program and how does it work?

Citizenship Assistance for New Americans (CNAP): CNAP funds immigrant serving organizations of Massachusetts to assist immigrants in the naturalization process. Services offered include legal services explaining naturalization requirements, regulations, and the immigration process around citizenship; instruction and application review; and application preparation and follow-up as needed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. CNAP providers also aid with transportation to and from Boston for the disabled and interview accompaniment. Through CNAP funding, organizations increase the number of immigrants becoming U.S. Citizens in a safe, efficient, and effective manner. Other components of the program include:

English for New Americans for Citizenship preparation: A coordinated statewide network that leverages public, private and individual funding of citizenship-oriented ESOL classes for recent immigrants. Classes are provided by Mutual Assistance Associations, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and others.

Civics for New Americans: Integrates civics lessons with ESOL services to prepare immigrants for the naturalization test, which has been changed and standardized recently. Organizations also provide opportunities for students to civically engage in local communities.

For more information, please contact Toby Guevin, State Policy Director at the MA Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition at 617.350.5480 x216 or tguevin@miracoalition.org.