

Advancing Citizenship Together: *Local Government & Community Strategies for Celebrating Naturalization in Challenging Times*

Tuesday, August 18, 2026 at 3pm ET



Welcome & Introductions

- Introductions in the Chat
- Slides, Recording & Resources will be shared after the webinar
- Send Questions via Q&A box

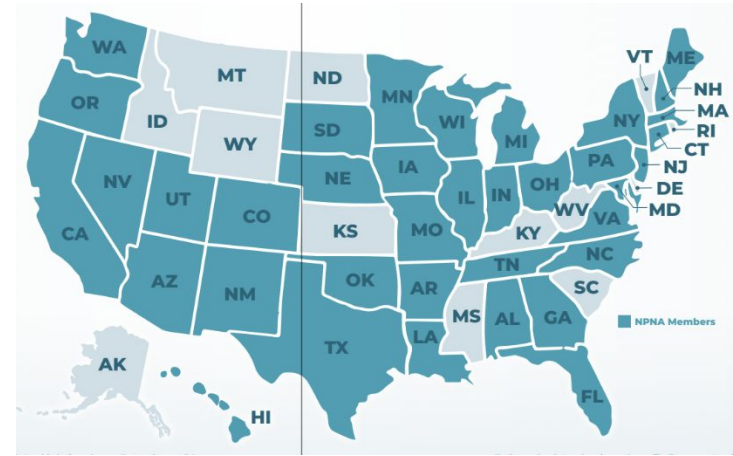
Purpose of Today's Webinar

- Share strategies for advancing & celebrating citizenship during challenging times
- Share effective strategies from practitioners
- Continuing to advocate & protect citizenship
- Citizenship Day/Month events

National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)

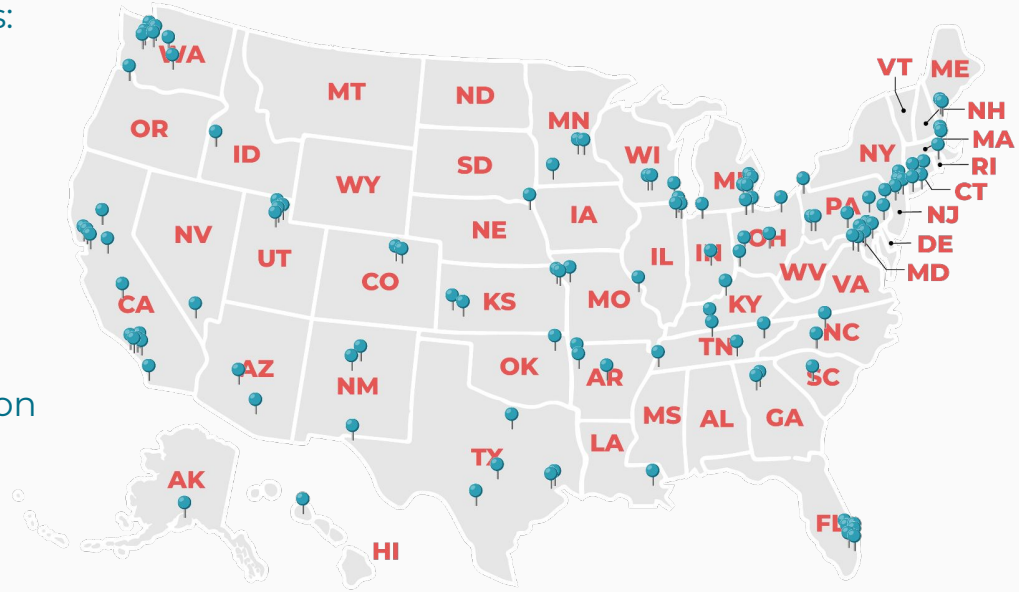
NPNA is a national coalition of immigrant and refugee organizations, with over 70 members across 40 states. Together, we lead:

- 1) **Immigration Legal Services + Capacity Building:** Community-based immigration legal services - from citizenship to deportation defense; community navigators to DOJ R & A to legal representation.
- 2) **Protection + Inclusion Programming:** Rapid response, language access, workforce + welcoming efforts;
- 3) **Immigrant Inclusion Advocacy:** Lead advocacy for local, state and federal immigrant inclusion policy initiatives - legal services, workforce, language access, etc; and,
- 4) **Inclusion Infrastructure Building:** Training, capacity building, convening for gov't + key stakeholders - ie. *Citizenship and Counties for Citizenship (CC4C)*, *Community Navigator & Inclusion Institute (CNI)*



About Cities & Counties for Citizenship (CC4C)

- Launched in 2014 with three founding cities: Chicago, Los Angeles & New York City
- Has grown to a network of over 120 cities & counties aimed at increasing citizenship among eligible U.S. permanent residents & advancing immigrant inclusion
- CC4C works with local governments to promote, support and increase the expansion of naturalization
- CC4C localities are leading the way in standing up to federal attacks & protecting communities



Cities & Counties for Citizenship Executive Committee



Seattle
Office of Immigrant
and Refugee Affairs

Speakers



***Gilberto
Pinela***

**Director of New
Americans**

**Office of the Mayor -
City of St.Louis**



***Nicole
Smith***

**Civics and ESL
Immigration Case
Manager**

**Hispanic and
Immigrant Center of
Alabama (HICA)**



***Paige
Buell***

**Citizenship
Coordinator,
Immigration &
Citizenship Program**

**Baker Ripley - Houston,
TX**

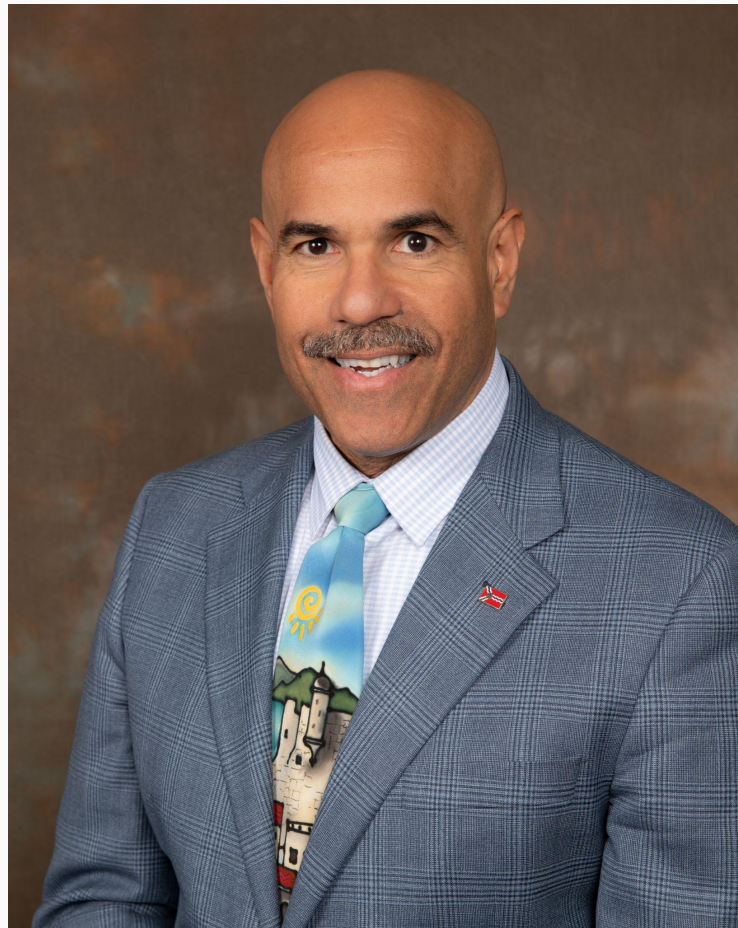
Strategies to Celebrate Naturalization in Challenging Times



Gilberto Pinela

Director of New
Americans
Office of the Mayor

**City of St. Louis,
MO**



NA
PARTNERSHIP
AMERICANS

Celebrating Partnerships



The Office of New Americans collaborates with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri and [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) to host naturalization ceremonies at St. Louis City Hall. In these collaborative events, city leadership welcomes candidates from dozens of countries as a federal judge administers the Oath of Allegiance.

Following the formal ceremony, the office coordinates with civic organizations, such as the [League of Women Voters of Metro St. Louis](#), to set up on-site tables that immediately help the newly minted citizens register to vote, ensuring they are seamlessly integrated into the region's civic and community life.

Classroom & Individual Instruction Programs

International Institute of St. Louis

Services: Offers dedicated citizenship preparation classes.

St. Louis Public Library (Citizenship Connection)

Services: Provides free educational resources and specialized study spaces.

Christian Friends of New Americans (CFNA)

Services: Operates formal, volunteer-led citizenship classes.

Immigrant Home English Learning Program (IHELP)

Services: Delivers highly individualized, free English instruction.

Monarch Immigrant Services

Services: Focuses extensively on home-bound, frail, or isolated immigrant.

MICA (Migrant, Immigrant, Community, Advocate)

Services: Provide legal services.



2025 Naturalization Ceremony



Making History at City Hall, St. Louis



Nicole Smith

Civics and ESL
Immigration Case
Manager

**Hispanic and
Immigrant Center
of Alabama (HICA)**



PNNA
PARTNERSHIP
W AMERICANS

Quick Overview of HICA's citizenship work.

HICA's Immigration & Citizenship Program

- DOJ Recognized since October 2008
- Citizenship Program launched in 2009
- Today, our Immigration & Citizenship Program consists of a **team of four staff members**
- HICA **does not have attorneys on staff**
- Immigration legal services are provided within the scope of HICA's DOJ recognition by **DOJ Accredited Representatives**

For more than 15 years, HICA has worked to make trusted immigration and citizenship services accessible to our community.



Quick overview of HICA's citizenship work.

- In partnership with the Junior League of Birmingham, HICA offers a free 10-week Naturalization Preparation Course.
- Students learn how to navigate the N-400 application, build the civics knowledge needed to pass the Civics portion of the test, and practice their English skills in preparation for the naturalization interview.



NPNA
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR NEW AMERICANS

PROMOTING CITIZENSHIP IN CHALLENGING TIMES

HICA's efforts this month & year-round



REACH

Radio • Social Media • Community Outreach



INFORM

Information Sessions • Newsletter • USCIS Updates



ASSIST

Naturalization Clinics Every 15 Days



PREPARE

Citizenship Classes • Civics • Mock Interviews



SUPPORT

Screening → N-400 → Interview → Oath



CELEBRATE

Recognizing and engaging our new U.S. citizens



REACH



EDUCATE



PREPARE



SUPPORT



CELEBRATE



*From the first conversation to becoming a U.S. citizen, **HICA** is with our community every step of the way.*



Citizenship Month



Celebrating the Journey to U.S. Citizenship at Homewood City Hall

Naturalization is more than completing an application—it is a life-changing journey.

Our constituents dedicate countless hours to:

- Strengthening their **English skills**
- Learning **U.S. history and civics**
- Preparing for the **USCIS interview**
- Overcoming fears and building confidence
- Staying committed throughout the naturalization process

Becoming a **U.S. citizen is an incredible achievement** that represents perseverance, dedication, and a new chapter.

At HICA, we are proud to support our constituents throughout this journey—and even prouder to celebrate this important milestone with them, their families, and our community

Paige Buell

Citizenship
Coordinator,
Immigration &
Citizenship Program

**Baker Ripley -
Houston, TX**



A
SHIP
FOR NEW AMERICANS



BakerRipley Immigration & Citizenship at a Glance

- 8 Naturalization Forums each year hosted at our BakerRipley community centers and other partner locations across Houston
- Legal immigration consultations and direct representation
- Social services for neighbors



New Citizenship Landscape

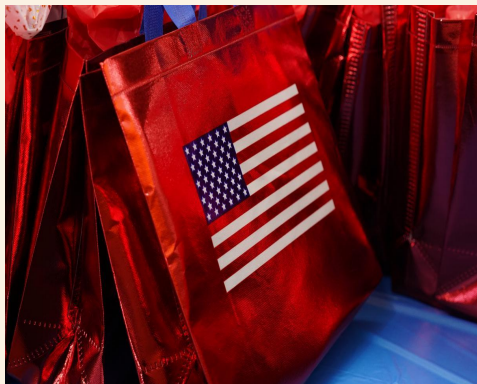


Barriers

Longer processing times | stricter scrutiny, more difficult exam and interview | possible fee increase

Looking Ahead

Citizenship informational and resource sharing sessions | Shift messaging and increase outreach efforts



Between August of 2025 to June of this year, our citizenship forums have seen an 84% decrease in attendance



Houston Area Partnership



- BakerRipley partners with the City of Houston Office of New Americans, NALEO Educational fund, and Univision to execute our citizenship forums
- Partner with HCPL and HPL to distribute ESL and citizenship class resources
- NPNA Space City New Americans Celebration





Call to Action

Continue educating, de-mystifying
naturalization, and empowering eligible
LPRs to apply for citizenship



Collaborate with local NGOs, community
organizations, and other citizenship
agencies to distribute resources across
all networks

Resource sharing, collaboration on
educational materials

REMEMBER



**Take care of yourself and take the
small wins that come each day**

Q&A

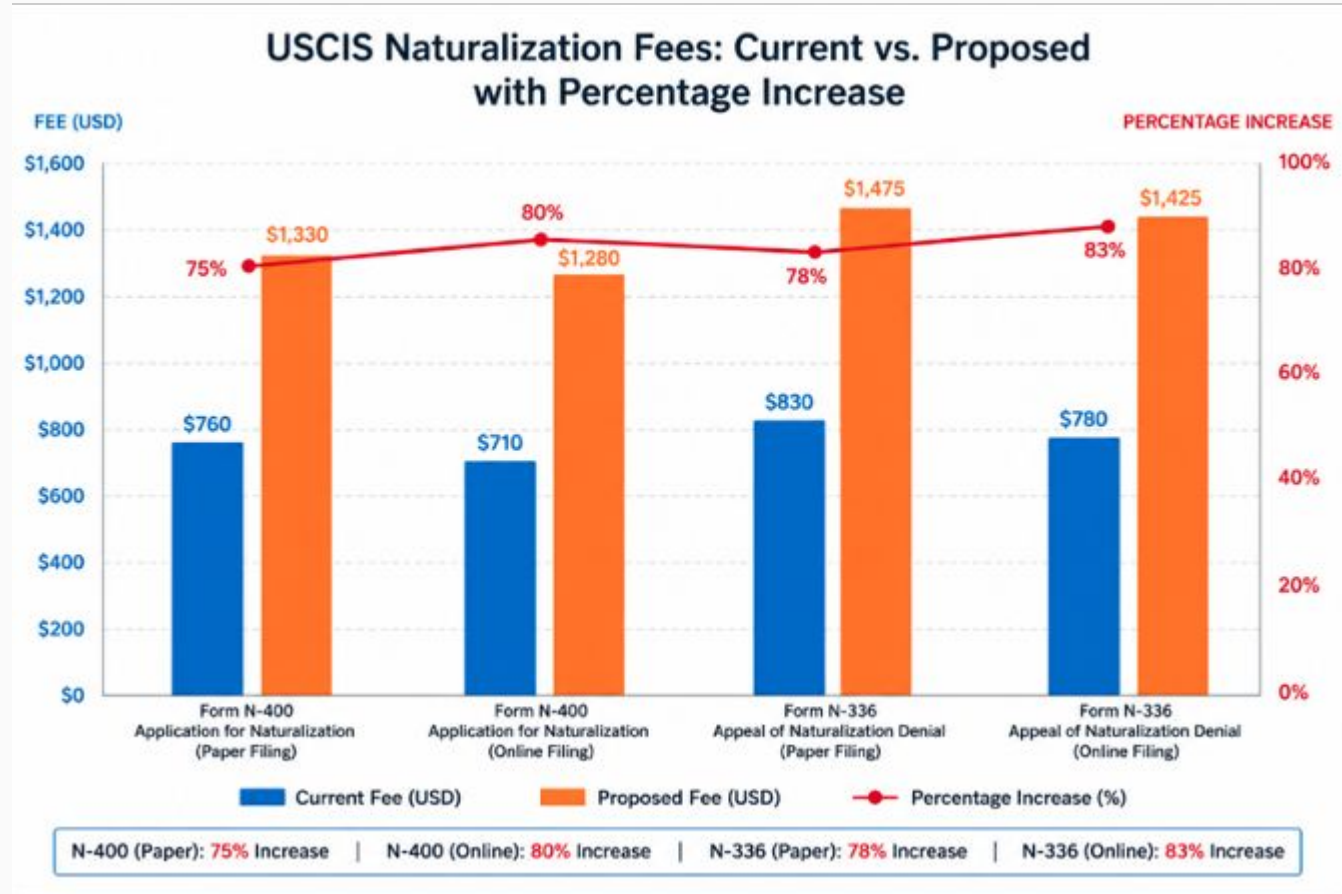
AILA's Citizenship Day



- AILA's Citizenship Day will take place on or around Thursday, September 17, 2026
- Citizenship Day is a nationwide event hosted by AILA chapters across the country along with local grassroots partners.
 - Each year, Citizenship Day helps thousands of eligible legal permanent resident prepare and apply for U.S. naturalization.
- AILA National provides training series to prepare Citizenship Day Coordinators and all volunteers to feel confident for their community event.

Proposed Fee Increase for Naturalization

In June, USCIS published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) - a proposed rule that would significantly increase the cost of becoming a U.S. citizen by nearly doubling naturalization-related fees and eliminating fee waivers and reduced-fee options.



SUBMIT YOUR OWN COMMENT

Submit online at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)

Comments help push back against harmful regulations

Write a Comment

[Commenter's Checklist](#)

[Public Comments on Federal Regulations](#) [↗](#)

Comment*

Start typing comment here...

Attach Files

You can attach up to 20 files, but each file cannot exceed 10MB. Valid file types include: bmp, docx, gif, wpd, xlsx, xml.

Drop files here or

[Browse...](#)

Email Address

Email Address

☐ Opt to receive email confirmation of submission and tracking number? If you choose to identify as Anonymous, the option to receive an email confirmation will not be displayed. (We will never post the email address entered in the field above on Regulations.gov nor share it with anyone else.)

Tell us about yourself! I am...*

(Select an identity below)



An Individual

Yourself or another person whom you represent with their consent



An Organization

A company, organization, or government agency



Anonymous

A person who does not want their name associated with the comment

Resources

- See [NPNA | ILRC | NAC: Overview of USCIS Proposed Rule on Naturalization Fees](#)
- [Template Comment](#): Includes instructions and tips for submitting effective comments, legal and policy arguments, customizable template language, and examples for stakeholder input. We encourage you to **tailor the template** to reflect your own perspective, creating a unique submission that is more likely to receive individualized administrative review. **Reminder: you can submit your comment anonymously.**
- [Stop the Paywall landing page](#) with talking points, simple step-by-step instructions for submitting customizable comments, and [toolkit](#) featuring social media graphics to help amplify the message.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)



Cities and Counties for Citizenship (CC4C), convened by the **National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)**, is a growing national network of nearly 120 cities and counties aimed at increasing citizenship among eligible U.S. permanent residents and encouraging localities across the country to promote and expand citizenship and immigrant & refugee inclusion programs. CC4C is chaired by the cities of New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Seattle.

Together, CC4C's work has brought ambitious and innovative visions to the imperative role cities and counties play in welcoming and supporting immigrants and refugees – and has created a long-lasting, multi-generational impact for U.S. permanent residents obtaining citizenship or moving toward naturalization through CC4C's strategic programs.

OVER 10 YEARS OF IMPACT

Advancing Citizenship & Immigrant Inclusion with Local Governments

- **Over 115 cities and counties** leading innovative initiatives, sharing effective practices, and elevating pro-immigrant narratives.
- CC4C has reached **over 5 million people** through citizenship outreach and awareness efforts over the past ten years.
- **Over 100,000+ lawful permanent residents** have been directly assisted by citizenship services.

In a time of increased enforcement, CC4C localities are leading the way in standing up to federal attacks, protecting communities and proactively preparing to stand up to ICE.

"The City of Chicago is a proud founding and executive committee member of CC4C since its inception in 2014 and we are excited to see this partnership grow and expand citizenship for our residents. In the Chicago area alone, over 337,000 residents are eligible for U.S. citizenship today, and this network can help them as they naturalize. We are appreciative of the work of localities and organizations across the country and our city who support immigrants and their path to citizenship. I look forward to our continued work together to welcome new neighbors"

– **BRANDON JOHNSON, MAYOR OF CHICAGO**



Invest in Cities and Counties for Citizenship Local Government Leadership

Support a strong future for CC4C, and strengthen NPNA's work to lead this crucially needed national initiative in cities and counties across the country. Grants, major gifts, and donations will drive positive impacts in diverse immigrant communities for generations to come, by opening doors of opportunity through naturalization and citizenship.

Join Cities and Counties for Citizenship

If your city or county is interested in joining CC4C, contact **Magaly Arteaga** at magaly@partnershipfornewamericans.org and learn more about CC4C at cc4citizenship.org



Invest in CC4C + Local Government Leadership

Support a strong future for CC4C, and strengthen NPNA's work to lead this crucially needed national initiative in cities and counties across the country. Grants, major gifts, and donations will drive positive impacts in diverse immigrant communities for generations to come, by opening doors of opportunity through naturalization and citizenship.

Join CC4C

If your city or county is interested in joining CC4C, contact Magaly Arteaga at magaly@partnershipfornewamericans.org and learn more about CC4C at cc4citizenship.org

Thank you

