



National Council of State Directors of Adult Education

Reecie Stagnolia, Chair

Position Paper English Language Requirements in Immigration Reform

As our Nation debates reforming our current immigration laws, a critical element that appears in almost every proposal is the requirement to learn English and civics, and to prepare for the examination to obtain citizenship.

The State Adult Education Offices (funded through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act - AEFLA) have the following experience and expertise to support the achievement of this requirement:

- Experience and expertise in providing innovative, results-oriented state-wide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English Literacy/Civics instruction that prepares adult learners for civic engagement and for the workforce;
- A well-honed professional development system to train ESOL teachers and support their skill improvement;
- Experience in funding and supporting public, private non-profit, community-based and other organizations to provide adult education services including ESOL and English Literacy/Civics;
- Experience as the *only* state-level organization in leading and managing state wide ESOL and English Literacy/Civics services.

The National Council of State Directors of Adult Education would like to recommend that any provision regarding the teaching of English, civics and citizenship to individuals seeking citizenship **be operated through the existing system of program services established in AEFLA and address the following issues:**

- **Expand accessibility to the current quality instructional and professional development services provided by the AEFLA adult education system with a federal investment over and above current AEFLA funding levels and distributed using the existing EL/Civics formula** to guarantee it reaches immigrant populations. At the present time we only can provide comprehensive intensive services to approximately 2 million individuals combining current levels of federal, state and local funding. Adult education programs across the country are generally at capacity, most with waiting lists.. With the increased demand for services, we will need a major influx of funding to meet the needs of the immigrants seeking services in order to obtain legal status and, ultimately, citizenship.
- **A new program should also allow for professional development for providers of ESL, civics and citizenship instruction.** We need to build capacity and ensure providers have sufficient staff members that are well trained in order to provide the best possible services to students.
- **Local providers should include those who work closely with the immigrant population** either as direct recipients or in partnership with existing adult education programs funded under AEFLA.