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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO NEW AMERICANS INITIATIVE TO
ASSIST ELIGIBLE IMMIGRANTS BECOME U.S. CITIZENS**

*The Chicago New Americans Initiative Will Directly Assist 10,000 Immigrants in Chicago; Most Comprehensive
Municipal Effort In the Country*

CHICAGO – Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced the Chicago New Americans Initiative today while hosting the first ever Citizenship swearing in ceremony in City Council Chambers with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Alejandro Mayorkas. The Chicago New Americans initiative will bring together the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights to offer assistance to thousands of eligible, law abiding, permanent residents in becoming naturalized, U.S. citizens.

“Whether in Rogers Park or Humboldt Park, Chicago’s vitality has been built on the strength of immigrant populations that have come to enjoy new freedoms and access new opportunities,” said Mayor Emanuel. “I am committed to making Chicago the most immigrant-friendly city in the world and with the Chicago New Americans Initiative we will ensure that every law-abiding Chicagoan has access to the resources they need to become productive members of society and contribute to our thriving global city.”

“Immigrants have embraced Chicago and Chicago is embracing them right back,” said Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (IL-04). “By helping immigrants become citizens and full participants in the life of our city and nation, we are strengthening the bonds that hold our community together. This effort, led by the Mayor, makes me all the more proud of Chicago’s present and all the more hopeful for Chicago’s future.”

“Illinois’ strength is its diversity and a shared belief in hard work,” Governor Pat Quinn said. “We can welcome many more to our democracy by helping them earn their citizenship. These new Americans show that our state is a place where you can come for a brighter future.”

The Chicago New Americans Initiative is a first of its kind comprehensive municipal effort to assist eligible immigrants become U.S. Citizens.



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The coordinated campaign will be led by the City of Chicago Mayor's Office of New Americans (ONA), in collaboration with the State of Illinois Governor's Office of New Americans (GONA) and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Uniting America Campaign.

Promoting citizenship will contribute to the City of Chicago's economic and cultural vitality and increase the City's global competitiveness. Compared to non-citizen immigrants, naturalized immigrants have incomes that are 14.6% higher, and poverty rates that are 9.9% lower—helping expand the City's tax base while reducing reliance on city services. New citizens mean new economic growth—and an investment in immigrant integration pays dividends not just for immigrants and their families, but for the city as a whole.

Over the next three years, the Chicago New Americans Initiative will directly help 10,000 immigrants in Chicago to become U.S. citizens; encouraging immigrants to independently initiate their naturalization process; and helping new citizens become fully active participants in the civic life of the city and state.

"We are excited and look forward to the innovative and productive partnership with the City of Chicago, through which we hope to assist 10,000 new immigrants in the city become New Americans, said Lawrence Benito, ICIRR's executive director and CEO. "Though our existing partnership with the State of Illinois and USCIS we have naturalized 58,160 New Americans over the last 7 years."

The Chicago New Americans Initiative will host regular citizenship workshops and numerous smaller citizenship assistance efforts in which legal permanent residents will be assisted, without charge, through the complicated and expensive process of becoming a citizen. The City will support these efforts by offering space in city facilities and conducting outreach in public schools, City Colleges, libraries, park field houses, and city service centers. These spaces will also be offered to host English/citizenship classes and citizenship-related education forums.

Chicago New Americans Initiative partners include numerous community, immigrant, faith, business, and service organizations that will be assisting with naturalization and recruiting U.S. born volunteers as "citizenship coaches" to aid in the naturalization process.

Approximately 560,000 immigrants live in Chicago. Since the creation of the ONA, the City has strengthened support for immigrant communities, immigrant entrepreneurs and immigrant business. The ONA has recently hosted a New Americans Small Business Series, an innovative series of quarterly events that will foster small business growth in immigrant communities throughout Chicago.

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