**STATEMENT OF**
**MARK SEAVEY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**
**NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISION**
**THE AMERICAN LEGION**
**BEFORE THE**
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, REFUGEES, BORDER SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW**
**COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**
**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
**ON**
**ASSIMILATION OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS**

**MAY 23, 2007**

The preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion states that "We associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order and to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism." These words are recited in unison at Legion meetings and represent a continuing contract of service to benefit America. It is this commitment by Legionnaires that is the fuel for action on immigration, both legal and illegal.

The American Legion has been a leader in mentoring candidates for U.S. citizenship, dating back to the beginning of the organization. Working closely with the U.S. federal courts, it conducted naturalization schools throughout the country, teaching immigrants how to become proficient in the English language and about lessons in U.S. history and about government. The Legion helped the new citizens become contributing members of our society. But the security, economy and social fabric of the United States of America is seriously threatened by individuals who come to this country with no interest in assimilating into our culture, and in failing to do so divide America into ethnic conclaves.

Immigration, both legal and illegal, is having a profound effect on public schools nationwide.

The federal government requires public schools to include English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in their curriculum to accommodate the needs of the non-English speaking students, regardless of their legal status. Additionally, special programs for non-English speaking students is, according to education groups, a hindrance to the overall learning environment in the schools.

Enrollments are projected by the U.S. Department of Education to reach 55 million by 2020 and 60 million by 2030. Immigration will account for 96 percent of the future increase in the school-age population over the next 50 years. *Without school-age immigrants and the children of immigrants, school enrollment would not have risen at all during the past decade.* As it was, school enrollment increased by 14 percent between 1990 and 2000, putting it at an all-time high. Current enrollment exceeds the record set in 1970 when the "baby boomers" entered the country's school systems.

These numbers indicate how imperative it is that these new Americans assimilate into American society, both in terms of learning our language, and in not self-segregating into racial or cultural enclaves.

The American Legion has long opposed any great influx of immigrants but, instead, has encouraged a path of moderation, embracing a concept that immigration should be regulated so that immigrants could be readily absorbed into the general population. Assimilation was important to both the government and The American Legion in the 1920's and 30's but it lost some of its luster in recent years as America directed its attention to the illegal migrant population and homeland security issues.

Assimilation into our society by new citizens remains important to the welfare of the United States. The failure of this country to absorb new immigrants into its society divides the nation and promotes racial and cultural bias. Immigration into the United States should be based on a two-way contract; that being a commitment by the United States to treat the new immigrants with respect and provide them with the rights and privileges guaranteed all citizens by rule of law. Nothing more, nothing less. The immigrants must pledge their loyalty and allegiance to the United States and that allegiance must take precedence over and above any ties they may have with their native country.

Candidates for citizenship express that allegiance in a naturalization ceremony when they are asked to take an oath – An Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance. That oath has elements that are important to The American Legion and were outlined in Resolution 356, Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, passed by delegates to the 88th National Convention of The American Legion in 2006 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Those elements are:

- Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties;
- Support for and defense of the United State Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;
- Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America;
- Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
- Take the oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion.

The American Legion believes strongly in maintaining the sanctity of the oath and supports language in the oath that is prescribed by the Congress of the United States for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act. The Legion also calls upon Congress to reject dual allegiance in principle and restrict and narrow its application in practice.

The American Legion is not opposed to legal immigration. There are, however, provisos to that statement. As a resolution based organization, The American Legion has voiced its position on patriotic assimilation of new Americans in many of its resolutions. For instance, The American Legion:

- Has voiced longstanding opposition to any great influx of legal immigrants and has called for immigration quotas be set on a moderate and regulated scale in numbers that enable the immigrants to be readily absorbed into the culture and life stream of the United States.

- Worked with the Hudson Institute to make the intellectual and moral case for a substantively strong and ceremonially rich citizenship naturalization process. The partnership jointly supports the position that candidates for U.S. citizenship possess a level of proficiency with the English language and an understanding of our country's history and its government.

- Believes that a naturalization ceremony should be made mandatory and conducted in a U.S. District Court. The American Legion also believes that all citizenship naturalization ceremonies in the United States should be conducted in the English language.

- Supports legislation that allows non-citizen veterans with less than three years of active duty service and who were legally in the United States at the time of enlistment, to seek naturalization if they are injured or their injuries were aggravated while on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces, resulting in a discharge under honorable conditions.

The problem of assimilation of new immigrants was addressed at length in a multi-part series by The Washington Post entitled "The Myth of the Melting Pot" written in 1998. As the Post noted at the time:

> Not only are the demographics of the United States changing in profound and unprecedented ways, but so too are the very notions of assimilation and the melting pot that have been articles of faith in the American self-image for generations. *E Pluribus Unum* (From Many, One) remains the national motto, but there no longer seems to be a consensus about what that should mean.
>
> There is a sense that, especially as immigrant populations reach a critical mass in many communities, it is no longer the melting pot that is transforming them, but they who are transforming American society.

President Theodore Roosevelt expressed his ideas on immigrants and what it means to be an American in a speech in 1907.

> In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith, becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American … There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the

> American flag … We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language … and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.

One hundred years ago…and the words of Teddy Roosevelt are still appropriate today. Let us not forget them.

As both chambers of Congress begin to look at Comprehensive Immigration measures, it is important to remember that while America is in fact a nation of immigrants, there are important differences in the way immigrants adapt these days, and the influences on them can be double-edged. Gaps in income, education and poverty levels between new immigrants and the native-born are widening, and many of the newcomers are becoming stuck in dead-end jobs with little upward mobility. It is vital that any immigration reform address not only how these people procedurally become American Citizens, but also how to encourage and facilitate assimilation.

EIGHTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
AUGUST 29, 30, 31, 2006

RESOLUTION NO: 356
**OATH OF RENUNCIATION AND ALLEGIANCE**

COMMISSION: AMERICANISM

WHEREAS, Since the earliest days of our republic, Congress has exercised its constitutional power to establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Rules of Naturalization, as established by Congress, requires an oath of allegiance and renunciation of all prior allegiances as a condition of naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance serves as a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign;
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic;
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that naturalization is a privilege, not a right, to be granted only in accordance with the conditions established by the Congress; and

WHEREAS, A "Citizenship Roundtable" was created by NEC Resolution 28 (Oct. 1999) titled "Citizenship Naturalization Process" that established a working relationship between The American Legion and the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization, and

WHEREAS, The Citizenship Roundtable opposes any revisions to the oath of allegiance that would dilute or eliminate the applicant's commitment, under oath, to the United States of America; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 29, 30, 31, 2006, That The American Legion opposes any and all changes to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, as used in naturalization ceremonies, that would dilute or eliminate any of the following important and necessary elements of the oath:**

1) **Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties;**
2) **Support for and defense of the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;**
3) **Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America; and**
4) **Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and**

5) **Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to prescribe the language that is used in the oath of renunciation and allegiance for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

EIGHTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
AUGUST 29, 30, 31, 2006

RESOLUTION NO: 358
**OPPOSE DUAL ALLEGIANCE; ENFORCE CITIZENSHIP OATH**

COMMISSION: AMERICANISM

**WHEREAS, The American Legion considers the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance to be a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to**

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign;
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic;
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, In taking the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, the immigrant pledges to transfer their full political allegiance from his or her birth nation to the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, According to immigration experts, the great majority of immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship come from countries that "allow or encourage multiple citizenship;" and

WHEREAS, From the beginning of this Republic, Americans have regarded the principle of dual allegiance as inconsistent with the principles of American constitutional democracy; and

WHEREAS, Many immigrant-sending countries, including Mexico, are actively promoting dual allegiance; and

WHEREAS, To retain allegiance to another constitution besides the U.S. Constitution, is inconsistent with the moral and philosophical foundations of American constitutional democracy, thus violating our core principles as outlined in the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance; and

WHEREAS, The integrity of the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance and the integrity of the entire citizenship naturalization process are challenged or compromised by the continuing increase in the number of U.S. citizens who hold multiple national allegiances; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion and the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization, have established a working relationship called the "Citizenship Roundtable" to address concerns about the naturalization process in the United States; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 29, 30, 31, 2006, That The American Legion encourage the Congress of the United States to enact measures to enforce the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance and reject dual allegiance in principle and restrict and narrow its application in practice.**

THE AMERICAN LEGION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46206
MAY 7-8, 2003

RESOLUTION NO: 45
**CITIZENSHIP NATURALIZATION PROCESS**

COMMISSION: AMERICANISM

WHEREAS, Citizenship in the United States of America is a priceless treasure as well as a privilege and an honor to be sought; and

WHEREAS, The person who possesses U.S. Citizenship is guaranteed many valuable rights and privileges and, at the same time, required to perform the obligations and duties of citizenship necessary to safeguard this country from all enemies; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the naturalization process and its requirements that an applicant for U.S. citizenship have a certain degree of proficiency and understanding of our language, history and government, are all vitally important in affecting a healthy assimilation into our society; and

WHEREAS, There are individuals, groups and organizations who are attempting to dilute the naturalization process in order to naturalize a greater number of applicants for citizenship by easing or eliminating certain requirements of the naturalization process; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been concerned and involved with the process of naturalization, immigration quotas and the enforcement of immigration laws since the beginning of the organization in 1919; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 313, "U.S. Citizenship Process," National Convention 1998, encouraged Congress to "…take necessary actions, including corrective legislation, to prohibit the demeaning of the naturalization process and ceremonies by groups and individuals entrusted with naturalization responsibilities;" and

WHEREAS, Some agencies of government have considered revising the current American government history test that candidates for citizenship are required to successfully complete; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, The American Legion joined with the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization, to form a coalition of organizations whose objectives are to serve as a "watchdog" group to ensure that the naturalization process for U.S. Citizenship is not devalued; and

WHEREAS, This resolution is a reiteration of Res. 28, "Citizenship Naturalization Process," NEC, Oct. 1999; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, That the National Executive Committee of The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 7-8, 2003, reiterates its**

**long standing position that candidates for United States citizenship possess a level of proficiency with the English language and an understanding of this country's history and its government in order to better assimilate into our society; and be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to work with the "Citizenship Roundtable," sponsored by the Hudson Institute, a broad based nonpartisan coalition to make the intellectual and moral case for a substantively strong and ceremonially rich citizenship naturalization process.**

EIGHTY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
AUGUST 29, 30, 31, 2006

RESOLUTION NO: 339

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE BE USED IN NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES**

COMMISSION: AMERICANISM

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 567, entitled, "Naturalization Ceremony," was passed by delegates to the 56th annual National Convention of The American Legion in 1974 and opposed any change in the Judicial Naturalization Ceremony for new United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, naturalization ceremonies have been conducted in foreign languages; and

WHEREAS, Several resolutions have been passed by The American Legion which urged Congress and the various state legislatures to declare the English language as the official language of government in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act makes the traditional naturalization ceremony conducted in a U.S. District Court optional and allows naturalization by mail, thereby removing an integral and indelible step in the naturalization process; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires and Posts of The American Legion have traditionally participated in naturalization ceremonies as part of the Legion's Americanism program; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 29, 30, 31, 2006, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 8, USC, Sec. 1448, that makes the court ceremony optional for naturalization and reinstate language that makes a naturalization ceremony in a U. S. District Court a mandatory step in the process of acquiring U.S. citizenship; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security to require that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies be conducted in the English language.**