STATEMENT OF
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THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, REFUGEES, BORDER SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
IMMIGRATION NEEDS OF AMERICA'S FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN

MAY 20. 2008

The American Legion has been a leader in mentoring candidates for US citizenship, dating back to the beginning of the Organization. Early on, the Legion worked closely with federal courts to assist naturalization schools throughout the country. By aiding legal immigrants with learning English and by teaching US history and American government the Legion helped the new citizens to become contributing members of our society.

Just recently, The American Legion began this effort anew. Under the Department of Homeland Security's "Task Force on New Americans" program, the Legion has partnered with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to again provide assistance to legal immigrants moving through the naturalization process on their way to becoming American citizens.

The early efforts and the renewed support to those who arrive on our shores legally, stems from the Legion's long-standing position on immigration. The American Legion remains opposed to any great influx of legal immigrants and has called for immigration quotas to 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.

Of all who would become American citizens, it is expected that they would have arrived in our country legally, and while within the United States been law abiding residents. Those unable or unwilling to do so should be held accountable.

The American Legion has supported legislation that allows non-citizen veterans with less than three years of active duty service and who were legally in the US at the time of enlistment, to seek naturalization if they are injured or their injuries were aggravated while on active duty with the US Armed Forces, resulting in a discharge under honorable conditions. The American Legion also encouraged the Congress of the United States to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die whether in

training on military installations or overseas in hostile conflict to continue their petition for permanent resident status without the current two-year eligibility restriction. Additionally, The American Legion argued that the Immigration and Nationality Act should be amended to waive the fees for posthumous citizenship assessed to surviving family members who lose a relative in hostile combat while a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and who has a pending application for United States citizenship.

The American Legion opposes any bills with provisions to waive certain grounds of inadmissibility for citizenship for both permanent residents who served honorably in the nation's Armed Forces and their family members. This would seem to reward law breakers and – possibly – illegal immigrants with a short cut to citizenship that is nothing less than an official pardon for illegal acts: an amnesty. Alien service members' relatives who have entered our country illegally or overstayed a visa or who may be fugitives from justice deserve no special "adjustment" to their alien status.

Honorable service in the military of the United States must be no more an asset to the family of a permanent resident alien than it is to the family of the American citizen who has served the nation with honor. No special pardon, no reprieve from lawlessness, no exoneration for bad behavior is given to the service person or their family because one wore the uniform of the United States military. The same should apply to the individual or the family of the individual who lacks the status of United States citizen.

Laws that prohibit illegal entry or continued unlawful residency in the U.S. exist for good reason. Those reasons include national security, the nation's economy, and the general impact that certain aliens would have upon American society.