



## NEWS RELEASE

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## Organizations Applaud U.S. Supreme Court Decision in Naturalization Case

### *Broad Coalition of Over 70 Groups Supported Protection of 28.5 Million Individuals*

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund applaud the unanimous decision of the U.S. Supreme Court today in *Maslenjak v. United States*. The Court acted to protect the rights of naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are pursuing citizenship status, ruling that a non-material misstatement in an applicant’s naturalization process cannot be the basis for denaturalization.

“Today’s ruling is a victory for all Americans, especially the 8.5 million people eligible for naturalization and the 20 million individuals who have already naturalized,” said John C. Yang, president and executive director of Advancing Justice | AAJC. “With today’s decision, individuals are protected from losing their citizenship based on inconsequential misstatements that have no ultimate bearing on being qualified for or retaining their citizenship.”

*Maslenjak v. United States* involves an ethnic Serbian woman, Divna Maslenjak, who fled to the United States to take refuge from the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. She was granted refugee status and eventually obtained her naturalization. Years later, Maslenjak was found to have made misstatements during the naturalization process and was subject to being stripped of her citizenship, along with facing criminal prosecution.

“We stand behind the highest court in America and our partners in celebrating that the freedoms of millions of hard-working immigrants have been protected. This decision will ensure that lawful permanent residents who take the next step by becoming U.S. Citizens do not have to live in fear that their rights may be revoked at any time,” said Arturo Vargas, executive director of the NALEO Educational Fund. “By upholding the rights of naturalized citizens today, the court has affirmed that the United States

supports those who come to this country to contribute to our democracy and economic prosperity.”

Advancing Justice and the NALEO Educational Fund, together with more than 70 organizations, filed an *amicus brief* to the U.S. Supreme Court to “highlight the great harms to naturalized citizens and the country that would result if naturalized citizenship could be stripped because of any immaterial false statement,” and the potential chilling effect on those eligible for naturalization. Attorneys from Wiley Rein LLP served as pro bono counsel on the brief. All the amici organizations work with or on behalf of immigrant communities and were concerned about potential barriers to applying for naturalization and broadly penalizing naturalized Americans.

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***Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC*** has a mission to advance civil and human rights for Asian Americans. We strive to empower Asian Americans and Pacific Islander communities across the country by bringing local and national constituencies together, advocate for federal policy that reflects the needs of Asian Americans, and promotes a fair and equitable society for all.

***NALEO Educational Fund*** is the leading nonprofit organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.