



NEWS RELEASE

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NALEO Educational Fund and Allies Discuss The Effect of COVID-19 on Naturalization

Experts and Lawmakers hold press call to promote importance of continuing Naturalization work through virtual oath ceremonies

Washington, D.C. – Earlier today, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund participated in a press call with immigrant advocates, lawmakers, and stakeholders to discuss the effect of COVID-19 on naturalization proceedings, emphasizing what the implementation of virtual oath ceremonies will mean for immigrant communities across the country. The proposed HEROES Act, which recently passed the House of Representatives and now awaits an uncertain vote in the United States Senate, would allow for virtual naturalization oath ceremonies.

The press call was organized in response to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) cancelling or postponing thousands of Naturalization oath ceremonies during the COVID-19 crisis without identifying a virtual alternative, potentially rendering hundreds of thousands of people unable to vote in the November election.

“Becoming an American citizen is the culmination of years of hard work and sacrifice for immigrants in this country,” said Arturo Vargas, Chief Executive Officer of NALEO Educational Fund. “Applying for naturalization is only possible after an individual has dedicated years to our country, meets the English language and civics testing requirements, pays hefty fees, and meets other requirements including having good character. Denying the opportunity to complete the naturalization process by not offering naturalization oath ceremonies during the pandemic is contrary to our democratic principles. Virtual naturalization oath ceremonies amid COVID-19 present the opportunity to fulfill the goal of U.S. citizenship for legal permanent residents who have met all of the requirements for naturalization and are waiting to take their oaths of citizenship.”

“Authorized immigrants in good standing with the law and who have met all requirements should not have to wait unnecessarily to be welcomed into the American family,” said Carlos Curbelo, former Congressman representing Florida’s 26th Congressional district who spoke on the call. “Our government should move quickly to naturalize legal residents who have earned their voice in our democracy.”

Additional speakers on the call included Miami Catholic Diocese Archbishop Thomas Wenski, Former United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Chief Counsel Ur Jaddou, Executive Director of Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) Eric Cohen, and Carston Keiffer, a green card holder and essential worker during the COVID-19 crisis.

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About NALEO Educational Fund

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.