

Today, on the anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, a holiday known as [Citizenship Day](#), we celebrate our allegiance to the United States of America. Our nation's great promise of opportunity has inspired people from around the world to leave their homelands to take part in the American dream. Citizenship Day gives us a chance to reflect upon our country and its dream.

From our founding and at our very core, America has always been a nation of immigrants, documented and undocumented, who have made great contributions to our nation. They built the transcontinental railroad that injected new life and industry into the American West, and their entrepreneurship and labor spurred the economy in our early American cities. By now, we should know that 'immigrant' is not a dirty word.

In 2006, the Boston Globe [reported](#) that immigrants started one in four venture-backed companies since 1990, and two in five in high technology. Foreign born entrepreneurs have certainly made their mark in my district in Silicon Valley, helping to found companies including Intel, eBay, Yahoo and Google.

Their contributions are also felt in the small business sector, as immigrants are one of the fastest-growing segments of small business owners in the United States. According to the [Kaufman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity](#), immigrants far outpace native-born Americans in entrepreneurial activity.

Looking toward our future with our aging workforce and our social security crisis, we need their contributions, now more than ever.

Despite the difficulties of our current economic challenges, their entrepreneurial spirit is helping to keep the American dream alive. After all, generation after generation of immigrants has taken the oath to become American citizens with love of country and commitment to America's promise. The faster we embrace each generation, the faster they become integrated as new Americans, and the stronger we are as a truly united country.

I introduced [The Strengthening Communities through Education & Integration Act](#) to help these new entrepreneurs joining our workforce to become integrated more rapidly within our society. The Act would invest in adult education programs for English language learners, including civics programs that teach newcomers about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

As a former principal and school teacher, I know the importance of investing in our youth. This bill would ensure that our nation's children and schools have adequate funding and resources for vital literacy programs for English language learners, and also assist schools with teacher recruitment for English language learners.

In addition, it would provide tax incentives for employers to offer training and ESL programs to their employees, and would support state and local initiatives in English language and civics education.

My legislation is [supported by a broad coalition](#) of business groups, labor unions, literacy and education coalitions, immigrant advocacy organizations, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic advocates, and faith based organizations, all who realize the importance of integrating new American communities. In the spirit of Citizenship Day, I invite my colleagues in Congress to join me as a cosponsor of [H.R. 6617](#) and [S](#)

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