

Guidance for Citizenship Communications with the Filipino Community

The New Americans Campaign conducted a nationally representative poll to study lawful permanent residents (LPRs) and measure their attitudes toward citizenship, identify what motivates them to naturalize, and determine the most effective messaging strategies. Here's what we found:

Filipino Lawful Permanent Residents

86% of Filipino LPRs have had their green cards for five or more years, and 83% want to become U.S. citizens. An overwhelming number (87%) of Filipino LPRs have a positive perception of the United States and 46% already consider themselves to be American.

Important demographic and socio-economic considerations include:

- 49% of Filipino LPRs are between the ages of 40 and 64.
- Filipino LPRs are highly educated. 70% are college graduates or possess a post-graduate degree. Another 24% have some college or technical school experience, and only 4% have only high school degrees.
- 48% of Filipino LPRs earn \$75,000 per year or more before taxes. 37% earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year. Only 9% earn less than \$25,000 per year.

How to Talk About the Naturalization Process

The most effective framing focuses on the following messaging points:

1. Naturalizing is easy.
2. Fee and language waivers are available.
3. There are many benefits to naturalizing.

There has not been a concerted effort to inform eligible LPRs about how to become U.S. citizens. In fact, 60% of Filipino LPRs say they have never received information about naturalization. Those who have received information said it was in English. While Filipino LPRs demonstrate an openness and willingness to become U.S. citizens, the lack of outreach has resulted in an information gap surrounding the naturalization process — one that would be easy to overcome. When talking about the naturalization process, it's important to consider the following:

- 41% cite the cost as the reason they have not applied for citizenship.
- 47% believe the naturalization process is too long and too complicated.
- Filipino LPRs are English speakers.

Best Vehicles to Reach the Filipino LPR Community

The wide variety of vehicles to reach people include TV, radio, print and digital media. The majority of Filipinos surveyed said that television was their preferred medium to receive information, and 81% said they would use a secure online system to apply for citizenship.

Topline Message:

“Becoming a U.S. citizen is easy and opens the door to many new opportunities. Start the process to naturalize today so you can have access to all the privileges, protections and opportunities that come with being an American citizen ...”

Motivators for Naturalization

When conveying the topline message, keep in mind the following key motivators for naturalization:

1. Travel/living outside of the U.S./traveling with a U.S. passport.
2. Access to benefits.
3. Increased job opportunities.
4. Protection from deportation.
5. Bringing additional family to live in the U.S.
6. Voting and running for office.

These are the top six motivators for naturalization. For internal reference, 70% of citizenship-eligible Filipino LPRs cited travel/living outside of the U.S./traveling with a U.S. passport as the most important benefit; 25% cited access to benefits; 24% cited increased job opportunities; 14% cited protection from deportation; 12% cited bringing additional family to live in the U.S.; and 10% cited voting and running for office. Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one benefit as “most important.”

Sample Messages and Talking Points

These sample messages should be adapted for various uses, such as text-messaging campaigns, social media posts, flier language and public service announcements. Consider adapting the messaging for the different media you use to reach out to LPRs. Remember that your messages should always include a “call to action” that directs people to a workshop, information session, hotline/telephone number or website.

- “Did you know that you could be eligible to receive a fee waiver to help cover the cost of the citizenship application? Call [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] at [PHONE NUMBER] for more information.” [You could also link to a page on your website, if applicable.]
- “Don’t let the English language hold you back from becoming a citizen. We offer free courses to help you learn what you need to know for your citizenship application and exam.”
- “You live here, work here and pay taxes here, yet you still don’t have a say in who represents you or in the laws of this country. If you want the government to respect your values you must vote, and to vote you must be a citizen.”
- “U.S. citizens have access to more job opportunities and higher income. Become a citizen today so you can have more employment and financial opportunities.”
- “As a U.S. citizen you can petition the government to bring your family to live legally in the United States. Find out how by [INSERT A CALL TO ACTION].”
- “Once you become a U.S. citizen, you have something that no one can ever take away from you. You can travel freely, bring your family to the United States and live without any fear of being deported.”