

Introduced by Senator Lara

December 3, 2012

An act relating to the Office of New Americans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 23, as introduced, Lara. Office of New Americans.

Existing law establishes the Naturalization Services Program, administered within the Department of Community Services and Development, to fund community-based organizations in assisting legal permanent residents in obtaining citizenship.

This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to establish the Office of New Americans to coordinate efforts and facilitate programs and services that result in the successful integration of California's new American immigrants.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of
- 2 the following:
- 3 (a) Immigrants are a vibrant force in California's changing
- 4 demographics. In 2010, the foreign born represented 13 percent
- 5 of the United States population and 27 percent called California
- 6 home.
- 7 (b) In 2009, 31.4 percent of foreign-born individuals were legal
- 8 permanent residents and 44 percent were naturalized citizens.
- 9 (c) Of the foreign-born immigrants who are over 16 years of
- 10 age, 68 percent participate in the labor force.

1 (d) According to the federal Small Business Administration, 18
2 percent of all small business owners in the United States are
3 immigrants. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, small
4 businesses owned by immigrants employed an estimated 4.7
5 million people in 2007, and according to the latest estimates, these
6 small businesses generated more than \$776 billion annually.
7 According to the United States Census Bureau, despite making up
8 only 16 percent of the resident population holding a bachelor's
9 degree or higher, immigrants represent 33 percent of engineers,
10 27 percent of mathematicians, statisticians, and computer scientists,
11 and 24 percent of physical scientists. In 2011, foreign-born
12 inventors were credited with contributing to more than 75 percent
13 of patents issued to the top 10 patent-producing universities,
14 according to the Partnership for a New American Economy.

15 (e) Additionally, the purchasing power of Latinos and Asians,
16 many of whom are immigrants, alone will reach \$1.5 trillion and
17 \$775 billion, respectively, by 2015. And, according to the White
18 House, increased immigration to the United States has increased
19 the earnings of Americans with more than a high school degree.
20 Between 1990 and 2004, increased immigration was correlated
21 with increasing earnings of Americans by 0.7 percent and is
22 expected to contribute to an increase of 1.8 percent over the long
23 term.

24 (f) During the 20th century, the nation launched a movement,
25 involving federal, state, and local governments, businesses, labor
26 unions, schools, and social organizations, to help integrate
27 immigrants into society. Today, however, few programs exist at
28 the federal or state level to accomplish similar objectives. If they
29 exist, they are often uncoordinated amongst themselves.

30 (g) Citizenship and civic participation on the part of all
31 California residents is vital to the economic and societal well-being
32 of the state.

33 (h) It is in the best interest of the state and its residents to
34 establish an Office of New Americans in state government to
35 advocate for, and promote cooperation and understanding between,
36 government agencies and immigrant residents, and to assist
37 immigrants toward naturalization.

38 (i) It is in the best interest of the state to support the ability of
39 all its residents, including immigrants, to be economically

1 self-sufficient, participate in our nation's and state's political
2 process, and develop a sense of responsibility for their community.
3 SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature to establish an Office
4 of New Americans to coordinate efforts and facilitate programs
5 and services that result in the successful integration of California's
6 new American immigrant.

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