

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 24, 2019

The Honorable Ken Cuccinelli
Acting Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Acting Director Cuccinelli,

We write regarding upcoming changes to the naturalization test, as announced by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) on July 19, 2019. While we do not oppose the continued revision of this test, it is imperative that any changes made to the test do not create unnecessary burdens or obstacles for those qualified permanent residents who seek U.S. citizenship, especially given the long processing delays that many applicants face. As Members of Congress who ourselves took this test to become U.S. citizens, we know first-hand the challenge that this test poses for prospective citizens, and the importance of carefully weighing any changes to the test.

We therefore request answers to the following questions:

1. Which USCIS officials are part of the "naturalization test working group"?
2. What input has the "naturalization test working group" solicited or received from White House officials?
3. Which non-governmental organizations or outside experts have been consulted thus far regarding the revision of the naturalization tests? Which non-governmental organizations or outside experts does USCIS intend to consult?
4. What factors did USCIS consider when choosing the timing for this process?

We respectfully request that you provide written answers to these questions no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after receipt of this letter. We would also welcome the opportunity to continue to work with you as this process advances.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,



NORMA J. TORRES
Co-Chair
New Americans Caucus



ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Co-Chair
New Americans Caucus

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TOM MALINOWSKI
Member of Congress



DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL
Member of Congress



JESÚS G. "CHUY" GARCÍA
Member of Congress



SALUD O. CARBAJAL
Member of Congress



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

August 7, 2019

The Honorable Norma J. Torres
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Torres:

Thank you for your July 24, 2019 letter regarding the upcoming changes to the naturalization test. I appreciate your interest in ensuring any revisions U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) makes to the naturalization test will not impede the process for lawful permanent residents who are seeking U.S. citizenship. Please see the enclosure for detailed responses to your questions.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken C II". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Ken Cuccinelli II
Acting Director

Enclosure

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Response to
Representative Torres' July 24, 2019 Letter**

1. Which USCIS officials are part of the “naturalization test working group”?

The naturalization test working group (WG) is led by career federal employees from the USCIS Office of Citizenship within the External Affairs Directorate. The WG includes members from the Office of Policy and Strategy, Field Operations Directorate, Office of the Chief Counsel, and Office of Public Affairs.

2. What input has the “naturalization test working group” solicited or received from White House officials?

The WG has neither solicited nor received input from White House officials.

3. Which non-governmental organizations or outside experts have been consulted thus far regarding the revision of the naturalization tests? Which non-governmental organizations or outside experts does USCIS intend to consult?

In order to ensure that the revision process is fair and transparent, USCIS is implementing a process similar to the redesign effort in 2008 in which six non-governmental experts in the field of adult English as a Second Language (ESL) review the test items and provide feedback. These six experts will be referred to as the technical advisory group (TAG). USCIS is soliciting a contract for external organizations who are nationally recognized in the field of adult ESL to facilitate the TAG. The awardee's roles include selecting the TAG members, coordinating logistics for TAG meetings, facilitating TAG meetings, and drafting reports for USCIS based on feedback about the test items from members of the TAG. The TAG will meet several times throughout the revision process to review drafts of test items and data from two pilots tests that USCIS is conducting.

USCIS will also coordinate with community-based organizations (CBOs) from around the country that offer courses in adult citizenship education, to administer the first pilot test in fall 2019. These CBOs are not involved with the TAG. Instead, their primary role is to provide:

- Classroom or office space for USCIS staff to administer the first pilot test; and
- Instruction on content from revised naturalization pilot test items using educational materials provided by USCIS.

In order to participate in the pilot, CBOs must offer adult citizenship education courses, and students must be lawful permanent residents and enrolled in an adult citizenship education course. Participation on the part of both CBOs and students in the first pilot is entirely voluntary. The students' participation in the pilot will not affect their status, eligibility, or application.

4. What factors did USCIS consider when choosing the timing for this process?

It is common practice to review and revise standardized educational materials and assessment around a 10-year timeline. The last test was revised in 2008. USCIS initiated this revision effort in 2018 to align with that 10-year calendar.