



Veteran Service Recognition Act One Pager

Background: Immigrants have served in the U.S. Armed Forces in every major conflict since the Revolutionary War. In return for their service, we must honor their sacrifices by supporting them and their families and giving them every opportunity to become U.S. citizens if they so desire. Unfortunately, noncitizen veterans have been removed before they can become U.S. citizens. Many times, such removals are due to a conviction for a crime stemming from trauma that occurred during the veteran's service in the U.S. armed forces. This means that a veteran who risked their life for our country and suffered long-lasting mental health problems as a result may be deported, separating them from their family and preventing them from accessing the benefits they are eligible for.

Summary: This bipartisan bill recognizes the service of our noncitizen veterans by: (1) making it easier for noncitizen servicemembers to apply for naturalization while in the armed forces; (2) establishing a review process for noncitizen veterans, active servicemembers, and their families who are in removal proceedings; and (3) providing an opportunity for noncitizen veterans who have been removed or ordered removed and who have not been convicted of serious crimes, to obtain legal permanent resident status.

First, the bill makes it easier for noncitizens who serve in the Armed Forces to naturalize. The bill directs DHS and DOD to implement a program that allows noncitizen servicemembers to file for naturalization during basic training, or as early as otherwise possible.

Second, the bill directs the Department of Homeland Security to establish a Military Family Immigration Advisory Committee. This committee will review the cases of noncitizen veterans and active service members in removal proceedings and will provide recommendations on whether prosecutorial discretion is warranted, or whether the removal proceedings should continue.

Third, the bill provides an opportunity for noncitizen veterans who have been removed or ordered removed and who have not been convicted of serious crimes to apply for and obtain legal permanent resident status if it is in the public interest.

The Veteran Service Recognition Act provides a narrowly tailored solution to a specific problem. This is a closed universe with a small and finite number of individuals who are eligible for relief. Additionally, by addressing the naturalization of noncitizen service members on the front end (e.g., during basic training), this bill will eventually eliminate the need to assist deported veterans in returning to the United States.

Endorsing Organizations: The American Legion, VoteVets, LULAC, AFL-CIO, UnidosUS, ACLU

House Coleads: Lofgren, Nadler, Correa, Vargas, Ruiz, Salazar, Radewagen

Senate Colead: Senator Padilla plans to introduce in the Senate in coming weeks