

2008-2009 Immigration Update 2

October 29, 2008

Immigrants Holding Public Office

With the election looming, we thought it would be interesting to look at how many immigrants are running for public office. Unfortunately, finding information about immigrant candidates proved difficult (actually impossible), but we did learn (via Wikipedia) that eight immigrants are currently serving in Congress, one in the Senate and seven in the House:

- U.S. Senator Mel Martinez of Florida, who was born in Cuba
- U.S. Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart of Florida, born in Cuba
- Ileana Ros-Lehtinen from Florida, born in Cuba
- Albio Sires of New Jersey, born in Cuba
- Ciro Rodriguez of Texas, born in Mexico
- Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, born in Japan
- David Wu of Oregon, born in Taiwan
- Pete Hoekstra, of Michigan, born in the Netherlands

Perhaps the most famous immigrant office-holder is Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California, who was born in Austria. Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan immigrated from Canada as a child. As far as we can determine, they are the only two immigrants currently serving as governors.

Number of Unauthorized Immigrants Falling

According to a recent report from the Pew Hispanic Center, the flow of unauthorized immigrants has slowed in the past few years. While the annual number of such immigrants was estimated at 800,000 earlier in this decade, the period from 2005 to 2008 has seen about 500,000 immigrants entering the country without documentation each year. The number of unauthorized immigrants has fallen below the number of legal permanent residents entering the country, reversing a trend that had been in place for a decade.

The total number of unauthorized immigrants in the country may actually have declined from 12.4 million in 2007 to 11.9 million in 2008, although this finding is not conclusive.

The report did not look specifically at reasons for the decline in the number of unauthorized migrants but hypothesized that two possible causes are the problems in the U.S. economy, stepped-up immigration enforcement, and new laws passed in many states.

To access the report and other recent reports from the Pew Hispanic Center, including a recent study showing that the annual income of noncitizen immigrant households fell 7.3 from 2006 to 2007, go to <http://pewhispanic.org/>.

Civic Dilemmas: Religion, Migration and Belonging in a Globalized World

Immigration to Europe from North Africa and the Middle East has led to major demographic shifts: more than 15 million Muslims live in Western Europe today. What dilemmas does that trend pose for European democratic communities? What can we learn about our own nation and communities by examining how individuals and groups have responded to these changes in Europe?

Facing History and Ourselves is offering a workshop focused on the tensions of religious freedom and identity through the lens of the French headscarf controversy. Facing History's newest set of classroom resources, "Civic Dilemmas," will be showcased.

The free workshop will be from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 6, at the Denver Center for International Studies, 574 W. 6th Avenue, Denver. For more information, contact Karen Mortimer at 303-316-4848; karen_mortimer@facing.org.

American Immigration Law Foundation Offers K-12 Education Grants

The American Immigration Law Foundation (<http://www.aifl.org/>) will award grants for the 2008-09 school year of \$100 to \$500 each to fund a limited number of K-12 grade-level projects that provide education about immigrants and immigration. The foundation seeks to fund activities that are innovative and supportive of AILF's mission of promoting the benefits of immigrants to the United States.

Applications are limited to educators teaching in public or private primary, intermediate, and secondary-level schools. Proposals that are classroom-based will receive strong consideration; the foundation encourages projects that can be replicated in other classrooms across the nation. Funds for field trips will not be granted. This year's program will focus on proposals that relate to the following categories: innovative use of technology; underrepresented minorities; community outreach and partnerships with community based organizations; and math and science.

Deadline for submissions is November 28, 2008. Grants will be paid to the teacher submitting the proposal. Visit the American Immigration Law Foundation Web site for complete program information. RFP Link: <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/15012347/aiflgrants>