



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

Legislative Summary

Res 31832

Record No.: Res 31832

Type: Resolution (Res)

Status: Adopted

Version: 1

Ord. no:

In Control: City Clerk

File Created: 08/09/2018

Final Action: 08/24/2018

Title: A RESOLUTION denouncing the enormous backlog of citizenship applications before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services that is currently preventing over 18,000 immigrants in Seattle from becoming U.S. citizens and voters; and affirming The City of Seattle's recognition of immigrants as New Americans who: are an integral part of Seattle's communities; supports them as they integrate into Seattle and the nation; upholds their right and opportunity to receive fair and equal treatment in their journey to obtain legal status, including citizenship, under the U.S. Constitution, statutes, and regulations.

Notes:

Sponsors: González

Filed with City Clerk: 8/24/2018

Mayor's Signature: 8/17/2018

Vetoed by Mayor:

Veto Overridden:

Veto Sustained:

Attachments:

Drafter: Emilia.Sanchez@seattle.gov

Filing Requirements/Dept Action:

History of Legislative File

Legal Notice Published: Yes No

Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	City Clerk	08/09/2018	sent for review	Council President's Office			
	Action Text: The Resolution (Res) was sent for review. to the Council President's Office						
	Notes:						
1	Council President's Office	08/09/2018	sent for review	City Council			
	Action Text: The Resolution (Res) was sent for review. to the City Council						
	Notes:						
1	City Council	08/13/2018	referred	City Council			
	Action Text: The Resolution (Res) was referred. to the City Council						

Notes:

1 City Council 08/13/2018 adopted Pass

Action Text: The Motion carried, the Resolution (Res) was adopted by the following vote, and the President signed the Resolution:

Notes: Motion was made and duly seconded to adopt Resolution 31832.

In Favor: 8 Councilmember Bagshaw, Councilmember González , Council President Harrell, Councilmember Herbold, Councilmember Juarez, Councilmember Mosqueda, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Sawant

Opposed: 0

1 City Clerk 08/15/2018 submitted for Mayor
Mayor's signature

1 Mayor 08/17/2018 Signed

1 Mayor 08/24/2018 returned City Clerk

1 City Clerk 08/24/2018 attested by City Clerk

Action Text: The Resolution (Res) was attested by City Clerk.

Notes:

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION 31832

A RESOLUTION denouncing the enormous backlog of citizenship applications before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services that is currently preventing over 18,000 immigrants in Seattle from becoming U.S. citizens and voters; and affirming The City of Seattle's recognition of immigrants as New Americans who: are an integral part of Seattle's communities; supports them as they integrate into Seattle and the nation; upholds their right and opportunity to receive fair and equal treatment in their journey to obtain legal status, including citizenship, under the U.S. Constitution, statutes, and regulations.

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle values being a welcoming city of community, opportunity, and equity for all residents, workers, and visitors; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle acknowledges the familial, community, and economic contributions that immigrants, including lawful permanent residents (LPRs), make to the City and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle recognizes the strength, diversity, and richness that immigrants, including LPRS, contribute to the City and the nation; and

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle created the New Citizen Program within the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD), a consortium of community-based organizations funded by a combination of state Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) funding, Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) funding, and City general fund money to help lawful permanent residents become U.S. citizens through class-based trainings and one-on-one assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agency U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) itself lists several benefits of immigrants naturalizing, including, but not limited to, the right to vote in federal elections, higher priorities for

1 petitioning family members permanently into the United States, obtaining citizenship for
2 children born abroad, and becoming an elected official; and

3 WHEREAS, numerous research-based publications exist that indicate the economic and civic
4 benefits immigrants have on the culture and economy of the United States, including the
5 nonpartisan New American Economy's data showing that immigrants in the Seattle
6 Metropolitan Area have \$16.9 billion in spending power in 2014 and paid \$10.3 billion in
7 taxes, a figure that would be larger with increased rates of naturalization. Local
8 immigrants are 17.2 percent more likely to hold a graduate degree than residents born in
9 the United States and are 28 percent more likely to be entrepreneurs than residents born
10 in the United States; and

11 WHEREAS, multiple studies show naturalization to have significant positive economic impact
12 for both individual immigrants and their local community and economy. Naturalization
13 can be a catalyst for a sense of permanence and long-term belonging to one's community,
14 and this is reflected through increased rates of home ownership, household incomes,
15 greater access to jobs, and employment rates grow when eligible immigrants become
16 U.S. Citizens; and

17 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle adopted Ordinance 121063 in 2003 put into place a "don't ask"
18 policy regarding immigration status to protect immigrants' access to police protection
19 and City services; and

20 WHEREAS, Ordinance 121063 was reaffirmed by Resolution 30672 in 2004; and

21 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle adopted Resolution 30851 in 2006, Resolution 31193 in 2010,
22 and Resolution 31490 in 2013 supporting Federal Comprehensive Immigration Reform
23 and fostering family unity with a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented; and

1 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle enacted Ordinance 123822 in 2012 to create an Office of
2 Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) and to rename the Immigrant and Refugee
3 Advisory Board that was established in 2007 to the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee
4 Commission; and

5 WHEREAS, to bolster its naturalization efforts, The City of Seattle created the New Citizen
6 Campaign in 2016, which moved the New Citizen Program from HSD to OIRA under the
7 New Citizen Campaign and presently convenes regularly scheduled large- and small-
8 scale naturalization events (citizenship workshops and clinics), facilitates partnerships
9 with credit unions for citizenship loans, established a citizenship web portal, and created
10 new partnerships with local non-governmental organization immigrant advocacy and
11 service networks, financial institutions, business, philanthropy, labor, and ethnic media
12 outlets; and

13 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle adopted Resolution 31730 in 2017 affirming itself as a
14 Welcoming City that promotes programs and policies that include all, regardless of
15 immigration or refugee status; and

16 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle adopted Resolution 31779 in 2017 supporting the Deferred
17 Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and denouncing harmful federal policies
18 and hateful rhetoric against immigrant communities; and

19 WHEREAS, The City of Seattle is a participant in the Naturalize NOW campaign, Cities for
20 Citizenship coalition, Cities for Action coalition, and New Americans Campaign;
21 partners with multiple community-based organizations and holds workshops and other
22 events to encourage eligible lawful permanent residents to apply for citizenship; and,
23 through these valuable collaborations and services, has to date, served over 19,500

1 people, resulting in more than 10,000 immigrants on the path of becoming new U.S.
2 citizens; and

3 WHEREAS, the current backlog of citizenship applications before U.S. Citizenship and
4 Immigration Services (USCIS), according to the newest data from the agency, prevents
5 18,707 immigrants in Seattle from becoming citizens, voters, and more active and
6 prosperous participants in local and national democracy, as part of 753,352 applicants
7 who are waiting nationwide to obtain citizenship, in accordance with the federal
8 Constitution, statutes, and regulations; and

9 WHEREAS, the 18,707 immigrants in Seattle who are part of the backlog at the end of the
10 second quarter of fiscal year 2018 (ending on March 31) represent a 49.03 percent
11 increase in the backlog before the USCIS field office in Seattle, compared to a year prior;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, the national backlog of citizenship applications in Seattle constitute the majority of
14 the 20,028 pending applications in the State of Washington, as of March 31, 2018,
15 making it the state with the ninth-largest backlog of citizenship applications; and

16 WHEREAS, the backlog of citizenship applications creates an effective second wall, similar in
17 intent to the proposed federal border wall along the southern border of the United States;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, this backlog of citizenship applications comes as part of a larger, harmful series of
20 changes within USCIS, including the agency: changing USCIS' mission statement to
21 remove the phrase "nation of immigrants" and removing its commitment to promoting
22 "an awareness and understanding of citizenship;" taking the unprecedented step of
23 committing limited USCIS resources towards stripping naturalized citizens of their

1 citizenship; broadly expanding the circumstances where USCIS commences removal
2 proceedings; implementing guidance to deny asylum for survivors of domestic and gang
3 violence; and implementing guidance that an asylum seeker entering the United States
4 outside a port of entry is grounds to deny the chance to describe credible fear of returning
5 home to a judge; and

6 WHEREAS, the above changes are making USCIS a critical component of the Trump
7 administration's anti-immigrant agenda, including: increasing enforcement and arrests;
8 stripping immigrants of their legal status, including DACA and Temporary Protected
9 Status recipients; reducing legal pathways to immigration; and separating families; and

10 WHEREAS, the substantially increased wait times for the naturalization process causes tangible
11 harm to the applicants and to the democratic process, such as: individuals who applied at
12 the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 will not have the ability to exercise their right
13 to vote in local and national elections in November 2018; other applicants may
14 potentially lose safety net benefits such as Supplemental Security Income; some
15 individuals may experience lengthy delays in reuniting with family, especially elderly
16 members of the family who live in other countries and who may need assistance; some
17 applicants may miss job opportunities only available to U.S. citizens; and increased stress
18 from both a continued risk of deportation as an LPR, uncertainty about a process that
19 previously took four months, and longer processing times resulting in increased needs for
20 additional evidence because documents submitted for the naturalization application
21 process become out-of-date; and

22 WHEREAS, Mayor Jenny Durkan joined with mayors and executives of municipalities across
23 the United States in signing onto a letter addressed to the Honorable Lee Francis Cessna,

1 the director of USCIS, urging him to take aggressive steps to reduce the waiting time for
2 processing citizenship applications down to six months, consistent with previous practice,
3 respectfully requesting a comprehensive and detailed plan describing how USCIS will
4 achieve these objectives along with a commitment from local USCIS District Directors to
5 share this plan publicly, and respectfully requesting a listing and description of previous
6 measures taken by the agency that had the goal of reducing the backlog and an analysis of
7 why they did not achieve their intended purpose; NOW, THEREFORE,

8 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE**
9 **MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:**

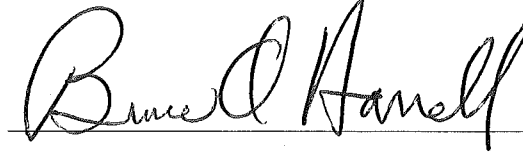
10 Section 1. The City of Seattle will celebrate and honor its immigrant members and their
11 numerous contributions to Seattle and the nation by affirming its commitment to be a welcoming
12 city, regardless of immigration or refugee status, and condemning the “second wall” of
13 citizenship application backlogs before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

14 Section 2. The City of Seattle demands that USCIS urgently take specific, measurable
15 and actionable steps to reduce the backlog and the waiting time for processing applications down
16 to no longer than six months, consistent with past practice.

17 Section 3. The City of Seattle affirms its commitment to work with community-based
18 organizations to educate the immigrant community about their ability to obtain citizenship and
19 expand legal services to help more individuals naturalize.

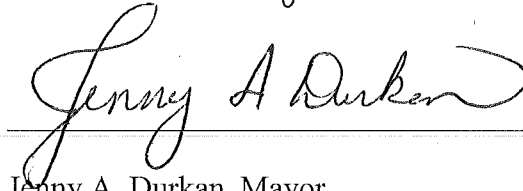
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1 Adopted by the City Council the 13th day of August, 2018,
2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 13th day of
3 August, 2018.

4 

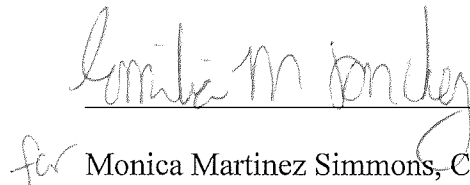
5 President _____ of the City Council

6 The Mayor concurred the 17th day of August, 2018.

7 

8 Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

9 Filed by me this 24th day of AUGUST, 2018.

10 
11 for Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

12 (Seal)