



Office of Communications

U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

# News Release

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## USCIS ANNOUNCES NEW NATURALIZATION TEST

*October 2008 Start Date Gives Applicants One Year to Study*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced the 100 questions and answers that comprise the civics component of the new naturalization test. USCIS will administer this new test to citizenship applicants beginning in October 2008.

Earlier this year, more than 6,000 citizenship applicants volunteered to take a pilot version of the test at 10 USCIS sites across the country during a four-month period. The 100 new civics items on the new naturalization test were selected after USCIS, a panel of history and government scholars, and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers conducted a thorough review of the responses to the 142 items on the pilot test.

“We are very proud of this new test, and the open manner that we worked with our stakeholders throughout this entire process,” said USCIS Director Emilio Gonzalez. “Together, we developed a test that will encourage citizenship applicants to learn and identify with the basic civic values that unite us as Americans.”

The revised naturalization test will help strengthen assimilation efforts by emphasizing fundamental concepts of American democracy, basic U.S. history, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It will also promote patriotism among prospective citizens.

Following the pilot, USCIS refined the questions and answers, dropping several and adjusting others to increase clarity, narrowing the list to the new 100 questions. The range of acceptable answers to questions will increase so that applicants may learn more about a topic and select from a wider range of responses.

For instance, one of the new questions with a range of correct answers is: “*What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?*” The applicant may respond with a variety of possible answers such as speech, religion, assembly, press, and petition the government.

USCIS conducted the pilot during actual citizenship interviews in 10 districts across the country: Albany, NY; Boston, MA; Charleston, SC; Denver, CO; El Paso, TX; Kansas City, MO; Miami, FL; San Antonio, TX; Tucson, AZ; and Yakima, WA. Volunteers who participated in this pilot test achieved a 92.4 percent overall pass rate on the first try. The pass rates by test component were: civics, 93.7 percent; reading, 99.8 percent; and writing, 99 percent.

Following the pilot, USCIS and an expert technical advisory group affiliated with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) reviewed the responses and re-piloted several re-phrased questions at 64 civics and citizenship classroom sites across the country. This secondary review was primarily focused on groups of individuals possessing Low-Beginning to High-Beginning levels of English comprehension to ensure that the average citizenship applicant was able to understand the question and answer items.