

ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Current Naturalization Services
2015-17 BIENNIAL BUDGET



Reduction Option	FY16	FY17	15-17
FTE	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)
GF-State	(\$1,657,000)	(\$1,657,000)	(\$3,314,000)
Total	(\$1,657,000)	(\$1,657,000)	(\$3,314,000)

REDUCTION OPTION SUMMARY

As required by 2015-17 Biennial Budget Instructions, the Economic Services Administration (ESA) is submitting a reduction option that would eliminate Naturalization Services. By implementing this reduction, ESA would no longer fund services that help refugees and legal immigrants on public assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) obtain United States (U.S.) citizenship.

REDUCTION OPTION DETAIL

Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is conferred upon a legal immigrant after he or she fulfills the requirements established under the Immigration and Nationality Act. Generally, a legal immigrant must learn basic U.S. history and civics, and pass a written or oral exam given in English by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) to become a naturalized citizen.

ESA coordinates naturalization services by contracting statewide with approximately 16 community-based organizations(CBOs) and the City of Seattle to provide naturalization assistance services to eligible immigrants. Some service providers hold multiple naturalization contracts because they provide services at different locations statewide. Examples of these CBOs include the Korean Women’s Association, which provides services in Pierce and Clark counties, and World Relief, which provides services in King, Spokane and Benton counties.

The major components of naturalization services include screening each potential applicant to determine if he or she should apply for citizenship, assistance in completing and filing applications, preparing fee waiver requests, assistance in obtaining a medical disability exception completed and signed by a physician, citizenship preparation training, interview preparation and assistance during the interview.

This proposal will completely eliminate the naturalization services provided by ESA. ESA will not renew the contracts with the CBOs in Fiscal Year 2016. In Fiscal Year 2013, approximately 3,110 participants received the naturalization services.

The impact of not providing these services will mean that these immigrants may not be able to obtain the U.S. citizenship due to a lack of access and support in completing this complicated application process. If these individuals



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ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Eliminating the Naturalization Services
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are receiving Washington State benefits through state funded programs such as the Immigrant Food Assistance Program (FAP), the transition to the federal funded programs may not happen or happen at a much later date. In addition, elderly and disabled refugees currently receiving SSI who fail to naturalize within seven years after they arrive in the US will lose their federal assistance. These individuals will be eligible for Washington State Aged, Blind, or Disabled cash benefits.

The naturalization services are funded solely by GF-State funds. No federal funds will be lost due to the program elimination.

ESA proposes to eliminate naturalization services beginning July 1, 2015. The proposed reduction will not require any notification to recipients or vendors. ESA staff will notify vendors that the contract will not be renewed for Fiscal Year 2016.

This proposal would require a statutory change to RCW 74.08A.130.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACT

Without state funded naturalization services, low income refugees and immigrants will be limited in their ability to fully integrate into the State of Washington, because the cost for assistance in completing the complicated naturalization application is prohibitive for low income families. Many will opt to not naturalize. As a result, they will be unable to become voting citizens of Washington State. Elderly and disabled refugees currently on SSI who are unable to naturalize within seven years will lose their SSI Benefits, a reduction of their monthly allowance of \$721 for 2014. Contracted CBOs will also be negatively impact due to the loss of funding.



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