

June 6, 2008

Honorable Members of Congress  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of the House of Representatives,

We, the undersigned faith-based leaders and organizations, join together to urge you to co-sponsor the **Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act**, which will be introduced by Rep. Honda (D-CA) in June. Our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion. The Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act addresses the need to invest in our workforce through literacy and civics education, and provides impact aid to assist local communities to integrate new populations.

We support this proposal because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of the lack of investment in new Americans. As the limited English proficiency (LEP) population continues to grow, it is critical that Congress support English language acquisition and integration. According to the Census Bureau, more than 19% of the population (54.8 million) speaks a language other than English at home. In spite of this fact, there continues to be one- to three-year waitlists for English literacy education in many areas.

The **Strengthening Communities through English and Integration Act** provides solutions that will accelerate the integration of LEP individuals by increasing resources for English language acquisition, civics, and basic education programs; providing financial incentives to employers who offer adult education and English language acquisition programs to their employees; and empowering communities to bring together key stakeholders to develop local solutions for integrating newcomers.

Specifically, this legislation would:

- Codify English Literacy and Civics Education under the Adult and Family Literacy Act and invest the necessary resources in these courses;
- Ensure that our nation's children and schools have adequate funding and resources for vital literacy programs for English language learners;
- Create tax incentives to employers who offer adult education and ESL programs to their employees; and

- Provide vital technical assistance and support to state and local communities seeking strong and productive strategies to respond to newcomers.

As a country rich in the tradition of welcoming immigrants, we must ensure that we continue to be a nation that embraces newcomers and facilitates their integration into our society as full and equal partners.

**We urge you to consider co-sponsoring this legislation.** For more information, please contact Wendy Ho ([wendy.ho@mail.house.gov](mailto:wendy.ho@mail.house.gov)) in Rep. Honda's Office.

Respectfully,

American Islamic Congress  
American Jewish Committee  
Anti-Defamation League  
Casa de Esperanza  
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program  
Christian Reformed Church in North American, Office of Social Justice  
The Episcopal Church  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)  
Hindu American Foundation  
Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference  
NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Standing For Truth Foundation  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations