



Naturalized Citizens No Longer Required to Pledge to Defend the U.S.

The Obama administration's immigration policies continue to be the subject of controversy, as documents reveal that it is not only illegal immigrants who have been able to circumvent immigration requirements, but legal ones as well. What's worse, changes to the process were made without congressional approval or intervention.



In a column for Breitbart News, former Congressman Tom Tancredo writes, "Under the Obama administration's expansive interpretation of executive authority, legal immigrants seeking citizenship through the nation's naturalization process are now exempt from a key part of the Oath of Allegiance."

That provision is the pledge to "bear arms on behalf of the United States" and "perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States."

The Immigration and Nationality Act has always allowed exemptions from armed service to the country, instead requiring either "[noncombat service](#)" or "[work of national importance under civilian direction when required by law](#)" if a person held opposing views "by reason of religious training and belief."

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The modification, which the Obama administration is calling a clarification of the requirements, allows immigrants to get an exemption to the oath to bear arms or perform noncombat service, based on a "conscientious objection."

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services ([USCIS website](#)) announced the changes last year:

Reciting the Oath is part of the naturalization process. Candidates for citizenship normally declare that they will 'bear arms on behalf of the United States' and 'perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States' when required by the law.

The *International Business Times* explains that a candidate

- May be eligible for modifications based on religious training and belief, or conscientious objection arising from a deeply held moral or ethical code.
- Is not required to belong to a specific church or religion, follow a particular theology or belief, or to have had religious training in order to qualify.
- May submit, but is not required to provide, an attestation from a religious or other type of



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organization, as well as other evidence to establish eligibility.

But this is clearly a change in the law — done administratively. The law expressly states that exemptions will only be given based upon belief in a Supreme Being and not for personal objections:

The term “religious training and belief” as used in this section shall mean an individual’s belief in a relation to a Supreme Being involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation, but does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views or a merely personal moral code.

Are such changes an improvement in U.S. immigration law? Or do they provide a huge legal loophole facilitating a path to citizenship by immigrants who express no loyalty to the United States and do not assimilate? Readers could certainly debate this question. But there is no question that under the U.S. Constitution, Congress, not the president, makes law, and the Obama administration is *making law*, not clarifying the law, which is against the law.

Moreover, it is indeed ironic that while naturalized citizens are now allowed to raise religious or conscientious objections to taking up arms for the United States, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services determined last week that two Catholic universities could not raise conscientious objections to providing health insurance that includes elective abortions.

Disagreeing with the change to the oath, Tancredo notes,

The pledge to help defend America was good enough for the 6.6 million immigrants naturalized since 2005 and good enough for the over 15 million naturalized since 1980, but Obama’s appointees at the USCIS think that is too much to ask of the 18.7 million estimated legal immigrants eligible today for eventual naturalization or the 750,000 who will be naturalized in the coming year.

Appearing on Breitbart News Sunday with host Stephen Bannon, Tancredo explained that he believed the change was made to the oath in order to encourage immigrants from Muslim countries to become naturalized, which makes some sense since Islam does not forbid participating in warfare but many Muslims might be personally opposed to aiding the U.S. armed forces: “This is a decision they made themselves because as the Muslim immigration population grows into this country, this may be something that would reduce the numbers, you know, if people actually had to do that,” Tancredo told Bannon.

And while the change to the oath was made last year, without any fanfare and without approval from Congress, Tancredo contends that Congress should since have taken action to reverse the changes. In his Breitbart News, he asked:

Why doesn’t Congress change the law and take control of the Oath of Allegiance? So far, there is no indication that the Republican leadership will do so.

But the law is already very specific, so Congress wouldn’t need to “change the law,” merely see to its enforcement; it is now just being ignored. Some members of Congress have indeed noted the change and publicly criticized it. In a statement on his official website, for example, Senator Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) stated, “All citizens of the United States — native or naturalized — should have that same sense of patriotism and duty. The Obama Administration’s announced change to the Oath of Allegiance undermines what it means to be a citizen of the United States.”

Tancredo asserts that since it has been one year since the change was implemented and nothing has



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been done to correct it, this is yet another example of an impotent Congress.



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