

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
78R12831 RVH-D

H.C.R. 156
By: Noriega (Van de Putte)
Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
5/12/2003
Engrossed

DIGEST

According to the United States Department of Defense there are more than 37,000 legal, permanent residents serving on active duty in our armed forces. Tragically, the military hostilities in Iraq have already claimed the lives of six of these noncitizen soldiers. It is a remarkable display of loyalty to the ideals of a democracy and freedom that these brave young men and women defend our country against aggression overseas despite not being recognized as U.S. citizens and not being able to share in the full rights and privileges enjoyed by U.S. citizens.

The United States Congress has the opportunity to help these brave residents and the surviving spouses and children of those killed in action to gain U.S. citizenship and benefits by enacting H.B.H.R. 1685 and H.B.H.R. 1275, the Citizenship For America's Troops Act. H.B.H.R. 1685 makes the surviving spouse and children of a person who has been granted posthumous citizenship through death while on active-duty service during times of military hostility eligible for immigration status and benefits. The Citizenship For America's Troops Act reduces from three years to two years the amount of military service required for legal, permanent residents to qualify for U.S. citizenship, and exempts them from paying all of the fees required by the naturalization application process. The Citizenship For America's Troops Act also allows the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to conduct citizenship interviews and oath ceremonies for military personnel at embassies, consulates, and overseas military installations rather than requiring such interviews and ceremonies to take place within the United States

On July 3, 2002, President Bush signed an executive order to provide expedited naturalization for aliens and noncitizen nationals serving honorably on active-duty status in the Armed Forces of the United States during the war on terrorism. The executive order designated September 11, 2001, as the first day of a period of time in which exceptions from the usual requirements for naturalization were initiated. Given that this period of time has not been closed or terminated by a related executive order, the congress should take this window of opportunity to honor the desires of the legal, permanent noncitizens who, in fighting global terrorism on our behalf, have demonstrated a willingness to die for a country they cannot yet fully claim as their own.

PURPOSE

H.C.R. 156 submits the following resolutions:

That the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully request the Congress of the United States to enact House Bill H.R. 1685, relating to providing immigration status and benefits for surviving spouses and children, and House Bill H.R. 1275, the Citizenship For America's Troops Act. That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.