



Department of Audits and Accounts

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January 5, 2015

Honorable Steve Henson
State Senator
121-B State Capitol
Atlanta , Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
Senate Bill (LC 41 0267)

Dear Senator Henson:

This bill would create the New Americans Program, to be administered by the Department of Human Services (OHS). This program's purpose would be to identify and contact legal immigrants in Georgia to facilitate their application for naturalization and inform them of the process involved to attain citizenship. The program would offer naturalization classes and assist legal immigrants in obtaining appropriate test and other exemptions in the naturalization process. As stated in the bill, the intent is that this program's assistance would enable such immigrants to attain citizenship within a two-year period.

The bill's fiscal impact to the State could range between approximately \$6.6 million and \$13.2 million annually, depending upon the proportion of Georgia's legal immigrant population who decide to participate in the program. According to the federal Office of Immigration Statistics, there are approximately 26,000 immigrants annually who are granted lawful permanent residence in Georgia.

Assumptions used to estimate the State's cost to operate the New Americans Program were based upon the cost of similar services provided by OHS to the State's refugee population. Categories of costs to operate the program would include: contracted services; personnel; equipment; and affiliated regular operating expenses.

The OHS contracts with private vendors and non-profit organizations to conduct outreach workshops and to provide naturalization and forms assistance classes to refugees. The contracted price per unit (attendee) is expected to increase to \$400 in fiscal year 2016. Using this \$400 per unit figure, if all 26,000 new legal immigrants in the state participate, the cost for outreach and naturalization assistance services would total

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about \$10.4 million. However, if only 50% of this legal immigrant population participate , this cost would total an estimated \$5.2 million. The OHS was unable to more accurately predict the number of potential participants, although the agency believes that not all eligible immigrants would need such assistance or have interest in citizenship. Additional contracted costs for space and supplies affiliated with these workshops are expected to range between about \$138,000 and \$276,000 annually , again depending upon the number of program participants. Using these estimates, total contracted services costs are estimated to range between roughly \$5.3 million and \$10.7 million annually.

Depending upon the number of part1c1pating legal immigrants , the DHS estimates that between approximately \$1.17 million and \$2.34 million would be needed for additional personnel. These personnel would be responsible for operating the program, providing case management and coordination and oversight of vendors, outreach services, and naturalization services. If about half of the State 's legal immigrant population participates, the DHS estimates needing 13 staff at a cost of approximately \$88,000 per position, including salary and benefits, plus an estimated \$24,000 for added supervisory costs. Altogether, these personnel costs would total about \$ 1.17 million. If the program 's client population doubled to include all of the State's estimated number of legal immigrants, the program 's number of staff and commensurate personnel cost would double, totaling a projected 26 staff with affiliated costs of approximately \$2.34 million.

Remaining estimated costs would include computer and telecommunications equipment for program staff and affiliated travel and supply expenses. These costs would correlate with the number of staff, as discussed above, totaling between approximately \$80,000 and \$160,000 annually.

According to DHS, future changes to immigration policy by the federal government could increase the number of persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status and, consequently, increase the program's costs. This could occur if the federal government eventually issues visas to a portion of currently illegal immigrants, which would likely cause this population to be eligible for services administered through the bill's proposed program.

Sincerely,

s/Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor

s/Teresa A. MacCartney, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/TAM/er/cb

