May 8, 2017 Citizen at Birth vs. Naturalized Citizens and Voter Registration: Implications for Elections in the 45th Congressional District

WHAT WE FOUND

1. Naturalized citizens make up one fourth (25.0%) of registered voters in the district, and;
2. Naturalized citizens are significantly different in their party identification compared to citizens at birth with much higher No Party Preference registration rates and much lower Republican Party registration rates.

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Elections in the district may very well hinge on:

a) the mobilization of naturalized citizens and;

b) the necessity of broader appeals in capturing their vote given high No Party Preference registration rates for naturalized citizens.

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Key Points:

● In the 45th Congressional District, the percentage of naturalized population when Representative Mimi Walters entered Congress (2015) was 28.22%. This was slightly less than the percentage of naturalized in Orange County (30.51%), but greater than the state of California (27.04%) and much greater than the nation as a whole (13.18%).

● The 45th Congressional District is ranked 53rd among all Congressional Districts in terms of the percentage of naturalized population.

● Naturalized citizens make up 25.0% of all registered voters in the 45th congressional district.

● 46.1% of citizens at birth are registered as Republican; only 27.5% of naturalized citizens are registered as Republican.

● 30.3% of citizens at birth are registered as Democrats while 36.1% of naturalized citizens are registered as Democrats.

● 23.6% of citizen at birth are registered as No Party Preference while 36.5% of naturalized citizens are registered as No Party Preference

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After the 2012 presidential election, the Republican National Committee commissioned a review of the 2012 election cycle in order to formulate a strategic plan for the future of the Republican Party. Going into the 2012 election, the Republican party had been very successful at the state level, with control of many governorships and state legislatures, as well as at the congressional level, with Republicans expanding their seats in the House. Nevertheless, leaders of the Republican party considered the loss of the popular vote in five out of the last six presidential elections as a potential harbinger of future results given demographic changes that have begun to reshape the population of the United States. In referring to these demographic shifts, the Growth and Opportunity Project Report stated,

America is changing demographically, and unless Republicans are able to grow our appeal the way GOP governors have done, the changes tilt the playing field even more in the Democratic direction. In 1980 exit polls tell us that the electorate was 88 percent white. In 2012, it was 72 percent white. Hispanics made up 7 percent of the electorate in 2000, 8 percent in 2004, 9 percent in 2008 and 10 percent in 2012. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, in 2050 whites will be 47 percent of the country while Hispanics will grow to 29 percent and Asians to 9 percent. If we want ethnic minority voters to support Republicans, we have to engage them and show our sincerity.

The changing demographic profile of the U.S. population was a key issue in the 2016 presidential election campaign, though the focus was on the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants residing within the United States and H-1B visa program rather than on reaching out to minority groups. In 2015, the Pew Research Center issued a report based on an analysis of U.S. Census data that showed a historic high in the share of the American population that is naturalized. According to this report,

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2 With the 2016 election the Republican Party has now lost the popular vote in six of the last seven presidential elections.
More than 41 million immigrants lived in the U.S. as of 2013, more than four times as many as was the case in 1960 and 1970. By comparison, the U.S.-born population is only about 1.6 times the size it was in 1960. Immigrant population growth alone has accounted for 29% of U.S. population growth since 2000.\(^8\)

With respect to the State of California, while California has nearly one in four of the naturalized population nationwide,\(^9\) immigration to the state has slowed since 2000. Even so, immigrants in the state of California remain a substantial part of the population, with half of all children in California in 2015 able to claim at least one immigrant parent.\(^10\) Table 1 compares the percentage of the naturalized population in California compared to the United States and how this has changed over time. In the year 2000, the percentage of the naturalized population in the United States was 11.05%. It increased to 12.39% in 2009, and by 2015 was at 13.18%.

In 2000 the percentage of the naturalized population in California was 26.17%; more than double that of the United States. In 2009, the percentage of the naturalized population in California was 26.82%, reflecting a modest increase of .65%. In 2015, the percentage of naturalized population in California was 27.04%, reflecting only a .22% rate of increase compared to 2009. While the rate of increase of naturalized population in California has nearly flattened, the overall percentage of naturalized in the state remains significantly larger than the overall percentage of naturalized in the United States.

The trends in Orange County with respect to the percentage of naturalized population largely reflect the overall trend in the state. In 2000, the percentage of naturalized population in Orange County was 29.86%, in 2009 it was 30.05% and in 2015 it was 30.51%.

**Table 1: Percentage of Naturalized Population 2000-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source: Census, <a href="https://csun-policymap-com.libproxy.csun.edu/tables">https://csun-policymap-com.libproxy.csun.edu/tables</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{8}\) ibid.


\(^{10}\) ibid
In the 45th Congressional District, the percentage of the naturalized population when Representative Mimi Walters entered Congress in 2015 was 28.22% (Table 1). This was slightly less than the overall percentage of naturalized citizens in Orange County (30.51%), but greater than the State of California (27.04%) and much greater than the nation as a whole (13.18%). Representative Walters thus represents a constituency that is more than one quarter naturalized, a significant percentage. The 45th Congressional District is ranked 53rd among all Congressional Districts in terms of the percentage of naturalized population (Table 2). Given these percentages, it would seem especially prudent that any representative of the 45th Congressional district be especially attentive to political issues of concern to naturalized citizens, such as President Trump's executive order limiting refugees in the United States.  

Table 2: Comparison of Naturalized Population in California 45 to County, State and National Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States (National)</th>
<th>California (State)</th>
<th>Orange, CA (County, 2010)</th>
<th>California’s 45th District, CA (Congressional District, 114th)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Foreign Born Population</td>
<td>13.18%</td>
<td>27.04%</td>
<td>30.51%</td>
<td>28.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>1 of 51 States</td>
<td>25 of 3142 Counties</td>
<td>53 of 436 Congressional Districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census, [https://csun-policymap-com.libproxy.csun.edu/tables](https://csun-policymap-com.libproxy.csun.edu/tables)

Are naturalized citizens as active as citizen by birth? Academic research related to immigrants in the United States have suggested varying levels and types of political participation. Language skills are perhaps one of

the most important factors with respect to political participation in general. Research suggests that the longer an immigrant lives in the United States, the more likely they will participate politically. First generation immigrants may be less likely to vote because of the lack of language skills and/or access to political information in a language other than English. However, some research also suggests that “those who live in states or metropolitan areas with high concentrations of co-ethnics are more likely to have contacts with, or exposure to, ethnic media and community organizations,” making information costs lower and rates of participation higher. Community organizations have been found to provide an important form of indirect mobilization, which is when political leaders mobilize citizens for political actions through social networks. Organizations such as the Iranian American Community Group, or the Korean-American Center to name a few organizations, provide opportunities to network and meet with others sharing the same language and cultural backgrounds.

An important barometer of the level of voter participation of naturalized citizens in an area begins with the percentage of registered voters who are naturalized. In the State of California, publicly available voter registration data includes place of birth. Place of birth is listed as either in a U.S. State or Territory, or Naturalized. Based upon this information, we can determine the extent to which voter registration rates reflect the percentage of Naturalized citizens in the general population by comparing them to census figures.

Table 3 shows the percentage of registered voters in the 45th Congressional District, broken down by type of citizenship: Citizen at Birth versus Naturalized Citizen. This data was obtained from the Orange County Registrar of Voters in March of 2017. The percentages shown suggest a slightly lower percentage of naturalized citizens (25.0%) as part of the population of registered voters, compared to their overall percentage in the population (28.22%). This is to be expected for various reasons, including the fact that census figures do not reflect citizenship status. Additionally, the census figures are from 2015, while the voter registration data is from 2017. Nevertheless, fully one fourth of registered voters in the 45th Congressional District are naturalized citizens.

By country, the largest number of naturalized voters are from Iran, with 2.1% (n=8808) of all registered voters in the district. Mexico follows with 2.0% (n=8390) of all registered voters in the District, followed by Vietnam.

14 Ibid. 878.
16 http://iac-group.org/
17 http://www.koreanamericancenter.org/
18 http://registertovote.ca.gov/
(1.8%; n=7388), the Philippines (1.7%; n=7072), South Korea (1.6%; n=6787), India (1.5%; n=6090), Taiwan (1.2%; n=4999), and China (1.1%; n=4538).

Table 3: Registered Voters: Citizen at Birth vs. Naturalized Citizens (March 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Citizenship</th>
<th>Percentage (Number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen at Birth</td>
<td>75% (308,884)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalized Citizen</td>
<td>25% (103,095)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing cases=1440 (place of Birth unknown)
Source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, 3/23/2017

Table 4 compares naturalized citizens with citizen at birth in the 45th Congressional District terms of party registration. The data shows statistically significant (Chi-Square) differences between the two groups. Whereas 46.1% of citizens at birth are registered as Republican, only 27.5% of naturalized voters are registered as Republican, a difference of almost 20%. 30.3% of citizens at birth are registered as Democrats while 36.1% of naturalized citizens are registered as Democrats. A similar percentage of naturalized citizens are registered as No Party Preference with 36.5%, compared to 23.6% of citizens at birth. The largest differences between naturalized citizens and citizens at birth are with respect to Republican and No Party Preference registration, with citizens at birth more likely to be the former, and naturalized citizens more likely to be the latter. Of the three major categories of voter registration in the 45th Congressional District, Republican registration is clearly the least favored option for the naturalized voters.

Table 4: Citizen at birth Citizens vs. Naturalized Citizens, Party Registration 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Citizen at Birth</th>
<th>Naturalized Citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>46.1% (135972)</td>
<td>27.5% (27322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>30.3% (89320)</td>
<td>36.1% (35891)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Party Preference</td>
<td>23.6% (69732)</td>
<td>36.5% (36270)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing cases= 18,912 (place of birth unknown, other party identification)
Source: Orange County Registrar of Voters, 3/23/2017

The results of this analysis suggest two important implications with respect to elections in the 45th Congressional District:

1. Naturalized citizens make up one fourth (25.0%) of registered voters in the district, and;
2. Naturalized citizens are significantly different in their party identification compared to citizens by birth, with a much higher No Party Preference registration and a much lower Republican Party registration.

Taken together, these results suggest that election outcomes in the future may very well be decided by: a) the mobilization of naturalized citizens in election campaigns, and; b) the necessity of broader appeals in capturing their vote given their comparatively high No Party Preference registration rates.