

## Inside the Bell

### Bill of Responsibilities – Citizen and Language

An earlier post (April 4, 2012) defined a number of amendments to the United States Constitution that, together, could be considered a Bill of Responsibilities akin to the original Bill of Rights. What is the reasoning behind each of the proposed amendments? In this post, I'll expand on the first two of the suggested amendments – citizenship and official language.

#### Who is a Citizen?

##### Amendment A -- Citizens

###### Section 1

A Citizen of the United States of America is a person whose mother or father is a citizen of the United States of America, has obtained citizenship through the process of naturalization, or is a Citizen at the time of the adoption of this amendment.

No individual may seek naturalization prior to attaining eighteen (18) years of age.

Congress shall define the process and requirements of naturalization.

###### Section 2

A legal resident of the United States of America is citizen of the United States of America or a citizen of any other country who resides within the borders of the United States of America and has achieved such residency in accordance with the laws and regulations as established by Congress and administered by the Executive.

###### Section 3

The parents of a minor citizen of the United States of less than eighteen (18) years of age, if not citizens or legal residents themselves, may apply to become legal residents of the United States. The Congress shall define the requirements, procedures and limitations of such application and approval consistent with the provisions of Section 2 of this amendment.

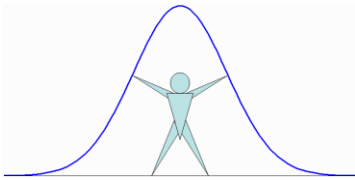
###### Section 4

The rights and privileges defined and conveyed in this Constitution shall apply to the Citizens and legal residents of the United States.

###### Section 5

Congress shall define, with the approval of the President, the rights and responsibilities of those individuals not citizens or legal residents of the United States.

Since the Civil War, the definition of a citizen has been in dispute. The Fourteenth Amendment, adopted in July 1868, sought to clarify the legal status of freed slaves. Unfortunately, the wording of Section 1 of Amendment XIV has been interpreted to include anyone “born ... in the United States.” This interpretation has extended citizenship to anyone born within the United States by happenstance or deliberate action. Citizenship has been conferred on so called “anchor babies” whose mothers entered the United States with the express purpose of having their child here and gaining automatic citizenship for



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their newborn. Sections 1 and 3 of the Citizens amendment seeks to eliminate the creation of “anchor babies” and deal with the situation created by their existence.

The existence of Section 3 will cause some to define this section as amnesty for those who are here illegally. However, Section 3 deals only with the parents of existing citizens and not all undocumented residents. Section 3 seeks only to unify the family unit supporting the child citizen. Section 3 also allows for the possibility that a naturalized citizen might seek citizenship for their parents who are not citizens, but those non-citizens are conferred no rights or privileges than any other foreign citizen seeking United States citizenship.

Section 2 defines those non-citizens who are legally within the United States and Section 4 limits the application of Constitutional rights and privileges to those citizens and individuals who reside legally in the United States.

Finally, Section 5 allows the Congress to address the legal rights, under the Constitution, of everyone not a citizen or legal Resident.

Not addressed in this amendment is the limitation that only citizens of the United States should be allowed to vote in elections. The Fifteenth Amendment addresses the rights of citizens and voting. Including it here might be redundant. If it is considered necessary, I would suggest language similar to:

Only Citizens of the United States in good standing are permitted to vote in the election of Senators, Representatives of the House, or the President and Vice-President of the United States.

Congress shall define the requirements of Citizens to be of good standing.

Relying on the tenth amendment definition of States rights, it is the responsibility of the individual States to define the voting privileges of citizens in local and state elections.

### The Elimination of Babel

#### Amendment B -- Language

##### Section 1

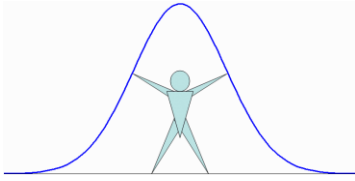
The official language of the United States shall be English.

##### Section 2

All documents, laws, forms, ballots and communications of the government of the United States are to be executed exclusively in English.

##### Section 3

It is the responsibility of the citizens and residents of the United States to understand English and communicate with the government of the United States in English.



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A common language is the bond that creates a unified national identity. The United States has been, almost since its creation, a magnet for people around the world promising opportunity and a better life. The resulting social structure is one with uncountable traditions, cultures, music and languages. Historically, national boundaries encompassing significant cultural differences eventually erect artificial barriers between the cultures, often defined by language. The histories of both Europe and the Middle East demonstrate the dangers of leaving these differences unaddressed. Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Palestine are the most recent that come to mind.

By one count, there are 6,809 languages in the world, (ethnologue.com in 2004) at least 326 (US Census Bureau) of which can be heard in the United States. It has been the practice of the US government to provide translations of government documents in at least 25 of these languages. (usa.gov) Many schools are required to teach in multiple languages. The cost, across all levels of government, is huge and the loss of understanding and productivity among people who cannot understand each other cannot be quantified.

Until recently, immigrants to the United States learned English as a matter of pride and dedication. The institution of a single common language for all governmental communications provides a cultural cohesiveness that also defines what it means to be an American. With a common language requirement, schools can concentrate on teaching everyone English and other courses in English, rather than each course in multiple languages. Law enforcement benefits from knowing the citizenry they encounter understands English and the workplace will unify around English with fewer misunderstandings leading to costly errors and injury.

The failure to learn English isolates many immigrants into communities that speak their native language and inhibits them from the advantages of the diverse society that is the United States. The inability to speak English also deprives the rest of the population the ability to understand the benefits of the many cultures extant in the United States. Many individuals will gain the benefits of multilingual capability and the freedom to teach and live their personal language and culture within their respective families and communities while also expanding their opportunities in the larger community. A common language will eliminate one of the factors creating a social underclass in the United States.

The benefits of standardizing on English as the language of the United States seem easily to outweigh the disadvantages

Russ

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