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**CLINIC URGES MORE PRODUCTIVE DEBATE ON CITIZENSHIP AND  
INTEGRATION**

**Washington, D.C.** – Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) calls upon the presidential candidates and elected officials to engage in a more productive discussion of citizenship and immigrant integration. In fiscal year 2007, 1.4 million persons applied for U.S. citizenship, double the number from 2006. This remarkable increase, combined with the massive demand for English-as-a-Second-Language classes, belie the claims of anti-immigrant groups that U.S. immigrants do not want to integrate in the United States. Unfortunately, processing times for naturalization applications have soared to 18 months. As a result, many lawful immigrants who filed for citizenship last year will not be naturalized in time to vote in the 2008 presidential elections. The delays are so troublesome that the House Immigration Subcommittee has scheduled a hearing on the issue for January 17<sup>th</sup>.

Instead of building on the momentum created by this massive influx of naturalization applications, many Members of Congress and at least two presidential candidates have supported the denial of citizenship -- which is guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment -- to children born in the United States to parents without legal status. In an egregious challenge to the “rule of law,” the Birthright Citizenship Act of 2007, which had 96 co-sponsors last Congress, would have attempted to make this change by legislative fiat.

“These kinds of proposals are disappointing and distract the American people from thinking seriously about how to strengthen the country by making the U.S.

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation’s largest network of charitable immigration services with 161 affiliates in 262 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies.

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naturalization process an accessible and model process” said Bishop Jaime Soto, Coadjutor of Sacramento, California and chair of CLINIC’s Board of Directors.

“Our nation’s strength and vitality depend on the successful integration and contributions of its newest members. Politicians should be debating the best ways to improve the citizenship process and achieve immigrant integration, not how to deny citizenship to children born here who will never know another country” said CLINIC Executive Director Donald Kerwin.

CLINIC has developed a plan to foster citizenship and integration. In its report, *A More Perfect Union: A National Citizenship Plan*, CLINIC outlines several key components to the successful integration of newcomers. They include citizenship application assistance; expanded English language, American history, and civics instruction; improvements to make the naturalization process a more timely and affordable one; and efforts to engage new citizens in civic activities and volunteerism once they have taken the oath of allegiance.

“These are the goals that our lawmakers should pursue, as they will serve us far better than punitive strategies that will hurt innocent children,” said Bishop Soto. “Citizenship can serve as a catalyst for immigrants to become more dedicated to democratic principles, more informed about American history, more proficient in English, and better positioned to make positive contributions to our society. Our leaders must be committed to implementing policies and changes consistent with these objectives,” he added.

CLINIC’s report is available at [www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org).