SS.7.CG.2.1 Benchmark Clarification 4*:* Students will examine the impact of the naturalization process on society, government and the political process.

Debates about **citizenship** and **naturalization** have had a significant impact (effect) on society, government, and the political process. Citizenship is still sometimes a controversial topic. At times, Americans have disagreed about who should be granted citizenship by naturalization and about how difficult the process should be to gain citizenship. Some people question how long an **immigrant** should be allowed to live in the U.S. without applying for citizenship.

Political parties have discussed these questions about naturalization in their **party platforms**, and **candidates'** views about naturalization influence how voters feel about naturalization and the importance of U.S. citizenship. As more immigrants naturalize and become involved in the political process, they also influence the debate by voting, running for office, being selected for public office, and participating in lawmaking.

For example, the **Voting Rights Act of 1965** was changed in 1975 to require that election ballots be printed in all of the languages in a county where at least 5% of the citizens living in that county speak that language. In other words, if 5% of the citizens living in Orange County, Florida, speak Spanish, then all election ballots must be printed in Spanish and English. This requirement makes it easier for naturalized citizens from Latin America to vote because every item on the ballot is printed in Spanish. Since the Voting Rights Act was changed in 1975, more naturalized U.S. citizens from Latin America vote in elections. Also, candidates are more likely to include Spanish-language commercials and posters in their campaigns to show they are reaching out to naturalized citizens.

Florida elected its first Cuban-American U.S. Senator in 2004 (Mel Martinez). Two brothers, Mario Diaz-Balart and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, represented Florida in the U.S. House of Representatives for several years. Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart was born in Florida (citizen by the law of soil), while Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart was born in Cuba and became a naturalized citizen.

candidate- a person running for political office

citizenship- being a legal member of a state and/or country

immigrant- a person who comes to a country to live there permanently

naturalization- the process by which an immigrant becomes a citizen

party platform- a written statement of the goals of a political party

Voting Rights Act of 1965- a federal law that banned race discrimination in voting practices by national, state, and local governments