



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 2095-2009, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 2095

Resolution calling on the United States government to give additional special consideration to applicants for naturalization who are veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

By Council Members Stewart, Barron, Fidler, Koppell, Liu, Sanders Jr., Sears, Weprin, Dilan and Nelson

Whereas, As of 2007, approximately 645,000 veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces self-identified as immigrants; and

Whereas, Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces include those who served in either the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, certain Reserve components of the National Guard, and the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve; and

Whereas, As of May 2008, more than 65,000 immigrants were serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces; and

Whereas, Generally, an applicant for citizenship must demonstrate good moral character, knowledge of the English language, knowledge of U.S. government and history, an attachment to the U.S., and must also establish residency and physical presence; and

Whereas, It generally takes between three and five years before a legal immigrant can apply to become a citizen, depending on various circumstances; and

Whereas, Membership in the U.S. Armed Forces does not automatically grant non-citizen immigrants U.S. citizenship status and, like all applicants for U.S. citizenship, veterans and active duty service members must meet strict requirements; and

Whereas, There is an opportunity for non-citizen immigrants who are on active duty or have been recently discharged to apply for citizenship earlier than those who have not participated in the Armed Forces;

and

Whereas, Presidential Executive Order No. 13269 allows non-citizens on active duty in the Armed Forces, who served at any time during a specified period of hostility, beginning September 11, 2001, to immediately apply for naturalization; and

Whereas, Despite this expedited citizenship process, many immigrants who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces during this period of hostility continue to have long waits for their naturalization applications to be processed; and

Whereas, As of February 2008, Abdool Habibullah, a Guyanese immigrant honorably discharged from the Marines, still had not heard about the status of his citizenship application completed when he returned from Iraq in 2005; and

Whereas, Feyad Mohammed, an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago and a resident of Richmond Hill, Queens, applied for U.S. citizenship four times between 2004 and 2007 during his two tours in Iraq; and

Whereas, Mr. Mohammed was finally naturalized in January 2008, six months after he was honorably discharged from the Army, four years after he submitted the first of four citizenship applications, and only after reaching out to Senator Schumer's office for assistance; and

Whereas, As of February 2008, approximately 7,200 service members in active duty or service members who had been recently discharged had citizenship applications pending; and

Whereas, Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who served honorably, but were no longer serving on active duty status as of September 11, 2002, may still be naturalized without having to comply with residency and physical presence requirements for naturalization, so long as they filed their application while still serving in the U.S. Armed Forces or within six months of termination; and

Whereas, There are reports of veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces who are facing deportation; and

Whereas, Warren Joseph, a veteran of the Persian Gulf war, was placed in custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials for more than three years, while immigration officials tried to deport him; and

Whereas, Mr. Joseph applied for U.S. citizenship twice while serving in the Army, but was never able to complete the process, due, in part, to an error made by U.S. Armed Forces officials; and

Whereas, The goal of many immigrants is to become naturalized U.S. citizens because of the number of opportunities that may become available, including employment benefits; and

Whereas, In order to be eligible for certain City positions, such as a police officer or fire fighter, an applicant must be a U.S. citizen; and

Whereas, According to the 2000 Census, approximately 2.9 million of New York City's residents were foreign born; and

Whereas, Non-citizen immigrants are allowed to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces in order to show their appreciation, support and commitment to this country, but they often must wait indefinitely to be deemed citizens of this country; and

Whereas, Non-citizen immigrants should no longer be denied the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship after proving their devotion to this nation by serving in the U.S. Armed Forces; now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the United States government to give additional special consideration to applicants for naturalization who are veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

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