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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Immigration and Naturalization Service

[INS No. 1918-98]

English Language, American History and Civics, Standardized Naturalization Test

AGENCY: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Justice.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the termination of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Service) Standardized Citizenship Testing Program, currently conducted by five non-government companies on behalf of the Service. The program, established under a 1991 Notice of Program in the **Federal Register**, will end at midnight on August 30, 1998. After the August 30 termination date, the Service will commence citizenship testing at the newly opened Application Support Centers as part of the ongoing effort to re-engineer and streamline the entire naturalization process.

DATES: The Citizenship Testing Program will terminate effective at midnight, Eastern Daylight Time, August 30, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Craig Howie, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Office of Naturalization Operations, 801 I Street, NW., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20536. Telephone: (202) 305-0539.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

What Is the Standard Citizenship Testing Program?

The Service established a standardized citizenship testing program pursuant to a Notice of Program published in the **Federal Register** on June 28, 1991, at 56 FR 29714-15. The program's model was similar to the testing program used with Legalization applicants as provided in section 254A(b)(1)(D) of the Immigration

and Nationality Act (the Act). The citizenship testing program was designed to facilitate the naturalization of persons who otherwise might be hesitant to apply for naturalization.

Section 312 of the Act requires most applicants for naturalization to demonstrate a basic understanding of the English language and an understanding of United States history and government. Traditionally, applicants are tested on English and United States history and government as part of the mandatory naturalization interview. The 1991 Notice established criteria that non-government organizations were required to meet in order to be authorized to conduct citizenship testing on behalf of the Service. These criteria included requirements for the administration of a multiple choice test on United States history, government, and written English. Naturalization applicants who take and pass one of these tests normally are not questioned on these topics during the mandatory naturalization interview before an officer of the Service.

Since publication of the 1991 Notice, the Service approved six national organizations to administer citizenship tests. Five national organizations currently are administering citizenship tests through networks of local testing centers across the United States. The Service has no contractual or financial ties with any of the companies authorized to conduct citizenship testing.

Why Has the Service Decided To Terminate the Current Testing Program?

The Service has been engaged in a complete re-engineering of the naturalization process. Part of this process involves developing new methods for applicants to demonstrate compliance with various naturalization requirements under the Act. For example, last year the Service embarked upon a new method for applicant fingerprinting. Fingerprints for all Service applications or petitions are now taken at Application Support Centers (ASCs). The Service now plans to commence citizenship testing at the ASCs so that applicants may fulfill these particular requirements at one time, with one visit. The Service anticipates publishing a proposed rule in the **Federal Register** later this year, outlining our regulatory proposal for citizenship testing at the ASCs. The authority for this decision to end the current testing program is found in section 332(a) of the Act which

authorizes the Service to determine an applicant's admissibility to citizenship.

How Long Will Testing Certificates Issued by the Current Testing Organizations Be Valid?

The Service will allow the current testing organizations to continue administering tests through midnight, Eastern Daylight Time, August 30, 1998. Test certificates issued noting a testing date on or before August 30, 1998, will be honored in accordance with Service regulations found at 8 CFR 312.3(a)(1). For example, an applicant who is tested on August 30, 1998, passes, and is issued a certificate, has until August 30, 1999, to file an N-400, Application for Naturalization, in order for the certificate to be honored. If the applicant has already filed an N-400 and is awaiting an interview, the certificate will be valid until a final determination on the application has been made, regardless of how long the time period is between the date of the test and the date of the final determination on the application. Service officers interviewing naturalization applicants will retest persons presenting certificates only if the officer has reason to believe that the certificate was either fraudulently issued or otherwise inappropriately granted. While not a requirement, the Service urges all applicants desiring to be tested by the current testing organizations to submit a copy of the passing certification as an attachment to the N-400 at the time of filing, and to bring the original certificate to the naturalization interview.

Dated: April 15, 1998.

Doris Meissner,

Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Office of Justice Programs

Office for Victims of Crime; Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request

ACTION: Notice of Information Collection Under Review; Reinstatement, with change, of a previously approved collection for which approval has expired; Victims of Crime Act, Victim Compensation Grant Program, State Performance Report.

This proposed information collection is published to obtain comments from