

This Oped was originally published at [AZ Central](#) on Jan,15 2024.

# Don't take chances now. Become a citizen before the 2024 election

*Opinion: More than 160,000 Arizonans are eligible to become citizens. Here's why we'd like to help a few hundred naturalize before the 2024 election.*

Two leading contenders for the 2024 presidential election have pledged to abolish birthright citizenship.

If they're campaigning for removing birthright citizenship, what's to stop them from coming after U.S. residents' protected status? It may seem a far-fetched idea that couldn't possibly come true, but as we've seen lately, the impossible in America is happening more and more often.

It's time to seriously consider this threat and take action.

Residency does not guarantee security, only citizenship does. But right now, there are so many residents who qualify for citizenship who haven't started the process.

In Arizona alone, there are at least 166,428 Long-Term Permanent Residents eligible to naturalize. Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of people who are eligible and have yet to begin the pathway to citizenship.

I know it's easy to feel secure in being a resident, but the time is now to take the next step.

Becoming a naturalized citizen provides security. You'll stay here with no risk of deportation. And you can actively participate civically to shape the future of your state and the country.

Take my colleague Michael Ruiz, who described his experience of becoming a citizen as "a sigh of relief."

He felt much calmer traveling outside of the United States and returning home through Customs and Border Protection. He even shared that his naturalization was a point of inspiration for his family when he started applying to colleges and even voted in his first election.

I'm also a naturalized citizen, and I remember going through this process with my mom. We were racing against the clock trying to get me naturalized through her before I turned 18 because, once I aged out, she could no longer petition for me.

It's easy to get caught up in the happenings of life and put this on the back burner. There are always other things to get done. But it was worth it to push myself to become a citizen.

That's why the organization I lead, Mi Familia Vota Arizona, is in the middle of a campaign to help a minimum of 280 Arizonans become citizens before the 2024 election.

Why 280? That was the margin of victory in Attorney General Kris Mayes' election in 2022 — which demonstrates that your vote as a citizen has the power to shape this state and our country.

In 2023 alone, Mi Familia Vota Arizona helped more than 120 people through their citizenship process.

Our message to residents: Set your citizenship plan in motion starting today.

At our recent Citizenship Fair in Phoenix, many of the folks who joined us sent their application in the mail the next day and were able to schedule for their interview within two to three months.

Upon passing, the ceremony celebrating them as naturalized citizens will take place another two to three months later.

We're here to help, too — eligible individuals should call Mi Familia Vota's office 1-833-868-2667 or visit our website to see our schedule of upcoming events.

A year ago we learned all too well that lawmakers are not afraid of stripping away long-held rights. Roe v. Wade, a once historic land-mark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court which had been in place for decades, was astonishingly overturned.

Get your citizenship now while you still have the chance. Removing birthright citizenship and blocking residents from becoming naturalized citizens is a nightmare too close to becoming a reality.

I wish I was exaggerating, but if living as an immigrant woman in Arizona has taught me anything, it is to not disregard the political threats of politicians looking to get elected.