



DEMOCRATS ABROAD

BEING AN AMERICAN ABROAD

If overseas Americans constituted a single state, this hypothetical state would rank 18th in population¹.



Americans overseas increasingly endure unintended but serious adverse impacts from US legislation in areas of Voting Access, Immigration, Taxation and Citizenship and its Transmission.

Voting access: Since 1975, several laws have been enacted to provide voting access to overseas Americans. More remains to be done in order to ensure that overseas Americans, and their children, are enfranchised. Children born overseas are required to pay taxes and register for Selective Service – but in many states are ineligible to vote.

Fair treatment in taxation: Enacted by Congress in 2010 as part of the HIRE Act, the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act is intended to provide transparency in reporting to prevent untaxed earnings from being moved out of the US. The law as it stands now has resulted in serious, unintended consequences for overseas Americans both in the personal and business side of their financial lives.

Citizenship: Current State Department policies frequently disenfranchise children born overseas to US parents who are unable to meet the U.S. residency requirements. Greater discussion of the implications of current policy on the transmission of citizenship is required to ensure that no child of a US citizen is born stateless.

Immigration: Following the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2013 D.O.M.A. decision the Department of Justice declared that the Federal government must recognize certain LGBT family ties for immigration and other purposes. While the 2013 decision was a victory and a relief for these couples, the legacy of decades of discrimination, particularly with deportation issues, remains to be addressed and rectified.

¹ Source: <http://www.ipl.org/div/stateknow/popchart.html#statesbypop>

All 6.32 million+ overseas Americans face problems related to at least one of the above areas.

In our countries of residence, our lives are not materially different from what they would be in the US: we take care of our families, we pay taxes to our country of residence, and we contribute to its society. We are parents, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and business people, part of the same middle-class group that lives within the 50 States. We pass our citizenship on to our children, grandchildren and spouses, either as a birthright or through naturalization. We are Americans first and foremost, proud of our nation and committed to it. We ask for recognition, acknowledgment of our needs, and fair treatment by our government.

ADDRESSING UNINTENDED ADVERSE IMPACTS

As a crucial first step in addressing the unintended adverse consequences of U.S. legislation impacting overseas Americans, Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Chair of the American Abroad Caucus, introduced (for the second time) HR 597 to establish a Bi-Partisan Commission to 1) formally study the impact of US Legislation and Regulation on overseas Americans, and 2) report its findings back to Congress and the Administration.

Bill HR597 has since been referred to seven separate House Committees, an indication of the far-reaching extent of its potential impact. It has the full support of key organizations of overseas Americans: Democrats Abroad; American Citizens Abroad (ACA); Association of Americans Residing Overseas (AARO); Federation of American Women's Club Overseas (FAWCO) and the Overseas Vote Foundation (OVF).

IN SUPPORT OF HR 597

Democrats Abroad strongly urges the 113th Congress to enact HR 597 and establish a Bi-Partisan Commission to study the impact of U.S. policy on overseas Americans and report their findings. This is an attainable, affordable and necessary course of action that will establish the basis for implementing remedial reforms to policies which have discriminatory and deleterious implications.

Failure to address the growing crisis of this situation would risk further disenfranchisement among overseas Americans, and a loss of standing in U.S. global reputation.