

NEWS FROM CONGRESSMAN BILL DELAHUNT

*For Immediate Release: Further Information:
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FAMILIES FROM ACROSS AMERICA TO GATHER IN BOSTON FOR HISTORIC CITIZENSHIP CELEBRATION Event Tomorrow Marks US Citizenship for 75,000 Adopted Children

WASHINGTON, DC—On Tuesday, February 27 at 10:30 a.m., hundreds of families from across America will converge on Boston's historic Faneuil Hall to celebrate a new law that grants automatic citizenship to children adopted from abroad and other foreign-born children of U.S. citizens.

When the law takes effect at midnight tonight, some 150,000 young people—including more than 75,000 adopted children—will become American citizens.

The Faneuil Hall ceremony will be the centerpiece of nationwide celebrations from Atlanta to Anchorage. Co-hosts for the event are the authors of the bill, Senate Deputy Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK) and Representative Bill Delahunt (D-MA). Delahunt is the adoptive parent of a daughter rescued during the fall of Saigon 25 years ago.

Also participating are three other legislators who were instrumental in securing enactment of the legislation: Sen. Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA), co-chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and Representative Henry J. Hyde (R-IL), chairman of the House International Relations Committee.

The ceremony will take place in the rich historical setting of Faneuil Hall, built in 1742, the scene of revolutionary speeches by Samuel Adams, the anti-slavery oratory of Frederick Douglass, and the call for women's suffrage by Susan B. Anthony.

Accompanied by the sound and color of a fife and drum corps, adopted children from 26 foreign nations will carry the flags of their native countries into the hall as diplomatic representatives look on. Adoptive children and parents from Iowa, New York and Pennsylvania have been selected to speak about what citizenship means to their families.

The featured speaker will be Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer and historian David McCullough, known to millions as the narrator of public television's *The American Experience*. The families will also hear from Adam Pertman, author of the pathbreaking book, *Adoption Nation*.

Other presentations will feature Chinese ribbon dancers and the color guard from the U.S.S. Constitution (“Old Ironsides”). The Department of State will have passport materials available for new U.S. citizens and their families, and the U.S. Postal Service has arranged a special cancellation of the adoption stamp issued last year.

The new law, known as the Child Citizenship Act, confers automatic citizenship on all foreign-born children who are under 18 years of age, admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents, and in the legal and physical custody of at least one U.S.-citizen parent. Under current law, these children must undergo formal naturalization—which can be costly and cumbersome—to become US citizens.

“The Child Citizenship Act will benefit countless foreign-born children and their families in the years to come,” Delahunt said. “It spares them the frustrating, time-consuming naturalization process, and puts an end to the serious problems that can confront those who fail to complete that process before adulthood.

“For adoptive families in particular, who have overcome so many obstacles to bring their children to America, the naturalization process is an extra burden they shouldn’t have to bear. Their children are Americans, and should be treated as such. Now they will be.”