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**GOVERNOR PATRICK RELEASES NEW AMERICANS
RECOMMENDATIONS; SEEKS ACTION PLAN IN 90 DAYS****Establishes inter-agency group to develop plan to promote integration for
immigrants**

BOSTON - Tuesday, November 17, 2009 - Governor Deval Patrick today unveiled the New Americans Agenda report, a comprehensive set of 131 recommendations for better integrating immigrants and refugees into the social, civic and economic life of the Commonwealth. The Governor also announced the creation of an inter-agency group to develop an action plan within 90 days for the report, a product of extensive research, expert interviews, input from state agencies and public feedback collected during a series of statewide meetings.

"The New Americans Agenda report is a values statement," said Governor Patrick. "It shows that we understand and welcome the significant contributions immigrants make to our Commonwealth, and want to do an even better job engaging them in building stronger communities."

Submitted by the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants and the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants in cooperation with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, the report offers a range of recommendations for how the Commonwealth can better recognize the contributions of its immigrant populations and better integrate the state's growing foreign-born population through improved policies or programs.

According to federal census data, there are nearly one million foreign-born residents in Massachusetts. Immigrants make up 14 percent of the state's population and 17 percent of the workforce. According to a recent report from the Immigrant Learning Center and UMass-Boston, immigrant-headed households paid \$1.2 billion in state income taxes and \$1.06 billion in property taxes in 2005.

"Every corner of our Commonwealth benefits from the contributions that immigrants make on a daily basis," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray. "In health, education, and our workforce, we recognize that we're at our best when we support immigrants in becoming part of our larger community."

The report finds that English language proficiency is the greatest barrier to immigrant integration and calls for the state to work with private and nonprofit organizations to eliminate the current waiting list for English classes in Massachusetts. It also offers recommendations in other areas, including education, public safety, economic development, health and refugee assistance.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. JudyAnn Bigby, whose Secretariat oversees the Office for Refugees and Immigrants, said, "The Patrick-Murray Administration has demonstrated its commitment to our refugees and immigrants and ensuring they become and remain connected to the fabric of the Commonwealth. The next phase of the New Americans Agenda will focus on turning many of these recommendations into action."

Other key recommendations in the report include:

- Establish training requirement in Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards (CLAS) for all state managers, service-delivery staff and all employees in health and human services, public safety and education;
- Include training on immigration history, trends and cultural competency, as part of professional development curriculum for teachers;
- Pass legislation that would allow all immigrant students to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities in Massachusetts, provided that they have lived in the Commonwealth for at least three years and have graduated from a Massachusetts high school or earned a GED;

- Improve access to re-licensing and re-certification for professional immigrants and refugees;
- Advocate locally and nationally for comprehensive federal immigration reform that includes clearer and affordable ways to attain citizenship and increased border security.

The Governor's newly established 15-member interagency group will include representatives from several state agencies and secretariats, including public safety, economic development, education, public health and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. The group will develop an action plan, timeline and regular progress reports, and the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) will work with state agencies on implementation, engaging with communities and stakeholders across the state.

"I want to acknowledge all of the people, families, leaders and organizations across the state who have participated in this New Americans initiative," said ORI Executive Director Richard Chacón. "Massachusetts has always been a Commonwealth of immigrants. While we recognize that immigration reform and enforcement is a federal issue, we must work together toward a shared vision of a brighter future for all of our residents."

"Investing in the full economic and civic potential of the foreign born in Massachusetts is a worthy initiative of the Governor," said Westy Egmont, co-chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants.

Eva Millona, the council's other co-chair and Executive Director of the MIRA Coalition, said, "This is the most far-reaching study of immigrant integration in the nation. We are hopeful the Governor and General Court will implement these thorough recommendations to better integrate these vital communities in our economic and social fabric."

The New Americans Agenda report is available online at: www.mass.gov/ori.

About the New Americans Initiative

The Governor's New Americans Initiative was launched in 2008 with the signing of Executive Order 503. It is a unique proactive, multi-year civic engagement and policy development process that involved community-based organizations, local governments and elected officials, academics and policy experts. As part of this initiative, the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants held public meetings in six regions of the state: Greater Boston, Merrimack Valley, South Coast, Cape and Islands, Central Massachusetts and Western Massachusetts. The meetings were attended by hundreds of local officials, residents, business leaders and youths.

About the Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)

The Office of Refugees and Immigrants promotes the full participation of refugees and immigrants as self-sufficient individuals and families in the economic, social and civic life of Massachusetts. ORI works with community-based organizations and other state agencies to provide a range of services to refugees, asylees, immigrants and other non-citizen residents. More information about ORI is available at: www.mass.gov/ori.

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