



PHOTO BY DIEGO DIAZ

Forty-eight immigrants from 20 countries took part in a naturalization ceremony May 5 at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland. Roberto Valla, left, originally from El Salvador, said he plans to vote, after having lived in the U.S. for 26 years. "I want to be sure of my safety," he said.

# Trump pushes immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship

BY EMILY GREEN  
STAFF WRITER

Residential candidate Donald Trump released his contentious immigration plan in August. Between that time and January, the average number of applications for U.S. citizenship each month was an average of 14.5 percent higher than during the same period a year earlier, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data.

Oregon saw an even greater increase in the number of immigrants eager to become citizens, with 20 percent more applications for citizenship filed through Portland's USCIS office during the last half of 2015 than the last half of 2014.

While an uptick in citizenship is typical of election years, immigration lawyers and advocates say Trump's anti-immigrant sentiment has motivated many people

who've lived legally in the U.S. for decades as permanent residents, to come forward and apply for citizenship so they can vote in the presidential election.

"This is a really key election for immigrant rights, both nationally and locally here in the state of Oregon," said Andrea Miller, executive director of Causa, a statewide immigrant rights organization that offers clinics to assist Latinos with citizenship applications.

In Oregon, what are perceived to be three anti-immigrant initiatives could be on the ballot this November: an initiative that would require proof of citizenship to vote; an initiative to make Oregon an English-only state; and an initiative that would require employers to verify the legal status of their employees.

"At every clinic we ask people why are they applying to become a U.S. citizen," Miller said. At recent clinics, she said, "almost every single one of the individuals said they were applying for U.S. citizenship because they wanted to be able to vote in the 2016 election — largely due to the anti-

immigrant rhetoric that they've been hearing from presidential candidates for the last year now."

This was the case for Silvia Sanchez, of Oregon City, and her daughter Adriana Sanchez, of Keizer.

Their family moved to Oregon from central Mexico nearly 20 years ago when Adriana was 6 years old. Until earlier this year, they had been living and working legally in the U.S. as permanent residents, Adriana as a substitute teacher's assistant, and Silvia as a food service worker.

They both became U.S. citizens in March and are looking forward to voting in the May Democratic primary. Both said they will likely vote for Bernie Sanders, although Adriana is still going back and forth between the two party candidates.

Adriana said she was motivated to earn her citizenship after "hearing so much negativity toward illegal people and immigrants."

She said she's also tired of watching immigrants working in the restaurant and

*Experts attribute uptick to desire to vote against candidate who espouses anti-immigration rhetoric*

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