

STATEMENT OF  
AIRMAN KARLA ARAMBULA DE RIVERA, U.S. NAVY  
Before the  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP,  
REFUGEES, BORDER SECURITY, AND INTERNATIONAL  
LAW

20 MAY 2008

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Chairwoman Lofgren and members of the subcommittee, I am pleased to provide you an overview of my experience as an immigrant to the United States. My name is Karla Arambula de Rivera. I am a native of Mexico. I was brought to live in the United States as a little girl and have lived here ever since. I married a U.S. citizen in 2004 and became a conditional permanent resident that was set to expire in two years. In March of 2007, I enlisted in the Navy. In July of 2007, I was supposed to apply to adjust my status to that of a lawful permanent resident, removing the conditions. While in A school in Pensacola, Florida, I went to Navy Legal Service Office Central where they helped me to file the I-751, to adjust my status based on my marriage to a citizen. This form was returned due to a post-dated check. I returned to Navy Legal Service Office Central where I was advised I could file instead an N-400 to become a naturalized citizen based on my military status. Navy Legal Service Office Central filed the N-400. I then reported to the USS CARL VINSON in August 2007. The VINSON checked on my immigration package to find out that the Nebraska Service Center had no record of me filing the N-400. The VINSON helped me file a new N-400 in December 2007. In January 2008, I was sent a Notice to Appear in Immigration Court in Los Angeles, California, due to the fact that my status was terminated because I failed to file the petition to remove the conditions (based on my marriage to a U.S. citizen). My hearing date was on February 28, 2009. I went to my new local legal assistance office, Navy Legal Service Office Mid Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia. With their help, I filed a Motion

to Change Venue to Arlington, Virginia, but the court would not rule on that motion until the day of the hearing, which required me to travel to California. At the hearing I was fortunate to be represented by pro bono counsel who had helped me file my original paperwork for residency. The counsel asked the judge to terminate the proceeding based on the Forman Memo put out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement which states that ICE should not initiate removal proceedings against military members who are eligible for naturalization under sections 328 or 329 of the INA. Despite the fact that I had an N-400 application pending based on my military service, ICE objected to the termination and the judge would only grant the motion written by Navy Legal Service Office Mid Atlantic to change venue to Arlington. I have a new hearing date set for July 1, 2008 in Arlington. Navy Legal Service Office Mid Atlantic helped me find an organization that would provide an attorney for free and got me started toward citizenship. I have an interview with the Norfolk Field Office for my naturalization scheduled for May 27, 2008. Hopefully, by the time my hearing in Arlington comes, I will be a citizen and this nightmare will be behind me. This situation has been extremely difficult for me both professionally and personally. As an enlisted member of the Navy, stationed on board the USS CARL VINSON, a carrier, that frequently deploys, I am worried about letting my shipmates down and working out of my rate if left behind during deployment, which would have an effect on my military career. I know the ship will ensure that I make the hearing, but it is difficult for them and for me. I have also had to

spend my own time and money traveling to Los Angeles for the removal hearing. I am grateful that I have had the assistance of Navy legal and opportunities to find pro bono legal services to help with this complex issue. If it hadn't been for their help, I would not have been able to afford legal counsel on my own.

Thank you for your continued support.