



Testimony

SJR 35

Testimony Before the Texas Senate State Affairs Committee

Chairman Hughes, Members of the Committee:

My name is Carine Martinez, and I am the director for the Secure & Sovereign Texas campaign at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute based in Austin, Texas. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SJR 35 today. This subject is of particular importance to me as an immigrant, and a naturalized citizen of the United States.

I immigrated to the United States in 2011 and became an American citizen four years ago this month, in the great state of Texas. My American citizenship remains, to this day, my most cherished achievement.

For eight years, as a permanent resident—a green-card holder—I benefited immensely from everything America has to offer, while contributing as well. Never did it cross my mind that, as a noncitizen, I should be allowed to vote. It stood to reason that one should make a definitive act of allegiance to a country to be allowed to participate in its governance, its laws, and its future. Consistent with that principle, even though I retained the right to vote in my native country of France, I refused to exercise it. I did not intend to return to France. I had decided to live here and become a U.S. citizen—and as a result I did not think I should play a role in shaping the future of my native country anymore. That prerogative belonged to those who wanted to live there as French citizens.

This is, first and foremost, a question of sovereignty. Let me tell you from firsthand experience: every American presidential election is followed in France, with some commentators arguing that foreigners should be able to vote in American elections because of America's hegemony. Make no mistake though: these commentators do not want to be American citizens. They want to change our way of life and our rights—without any commitment to America or Americans. That's the danger of noncitizen voting: you cannot allow American law and governance to be subjected to those who have not committed themselves to America's fate.

National sovereignty rightly requires that elections only allow citizens to vote.

To conclude, immigrants to the United States come here for many reasons but overall because they want to be part of the greatest experiment mankind has known—the creation and preservation of a country based on the principles of individual rights, self-governance, and self-responsibility. To be part of that experiment, they pledge allegiance to the United States. Clarifying that only U.S. citizens can vote in Texas will help prevent the dilution of the fundamental right of American citizens to vote. It will also preserve the great experiment that immigrants like me have striven so hard to be a part of.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

