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WASHINGTON'S 9TH DISTRICT

Adoptee Citizenship Act

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Families who adopted children from abroad were previously required to go through a lengthy process to naturalize and gain United States citizenship for their adopted children, in addition to the long, costly, and burdensome adoption process. Sometimes, the necessary paperwork was not entirely completed, and significant numbers of adoptees grew up for years unaware that they were living in the United States as non-citizens.

The *Child Citizenship Act of 2000* (CCA) eliminated the need for many adoptive families to apply to naturalize their newly adopted children. This law grants automatic citizenship to all foreign-born children brought to the United States under the age of 18 and have at least one parent who is a U.S. Citizen. It applied to all future adoptees as well as those under the age of 18 who were adopted prior to the effective date of the CCA.

Unfortunately, the 2000 CCA law only applied to future adoptees and adoptees who were under the age of 18 on its effective date; it did not apply retroactively to those adoptees who faced the same dilemma but aged into adulthood before the CCA took effect. For these international adoptees, the U.S. is the place they grew up and the place they call home. Yet, through no fault of their own, they never received their citizenship and are living in uncertainty about their future.

The **Adoptee Citizenship Act** corrects this gap in the law by confirming international adoptees' U.S. citizenship status, regardless of when they were adopted or their age. Specifically, the Adoptee Citizenship Act:

- Provides automatic U.S. citizenship to foreign-born children lawfully adopted by U.S. families who turned 18 years old before the effective date of the CCA (February 27, 2001).
- Includes a process for eligible adoptees who were brought to the U.S. for adoption but currently reside outside of the United States to gain U.S. citizenship, pending a background check and the resolution of any outstanding crimes with the appropriate law enforcement agency.

This important bill provides much needed certainty to adopted Americans who have had difficulties attending college, accessing banking services, and starting their careers simply because of paperwork and process oversights during their childhood.