FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 2, 2012

Contact: Jared Sanchez  
Tel: 213.740.7110  
Cell Phone: 714.262.0921  
E-mail: jpsanche@usc.edu

Rock the (Naturalized) Vote  
USC’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration releases never-before-seen data of naturalized citizens and their potential for voter registration.

Los Angeles, CA—Today, the University of Southern California’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII) launches an interactive, online mapping tool that identifies the share of recently naturalized immigrants in the voting-age citizen population in the U.S. This innovative, user-friendly tool, designed to illustrate the potential importance of this vote and help target resources for more effective efforts at registration and mobilization, is available at: http://csii.usc.edu/RockTheNaturalizedVote.html

Newly naturalized citizens of voting age are approximately 3.6 percent of the voting-age citizen population. While this number may seem small, the margin of victory in the 2004 election—the last time an incumbent was up for reelection—was only 2.6 percent in Nevada, a state where 5.1 percent of the voting age citizen population now consists of recently naturalized immigrants, meaning in the tightly contested 2012 Presidential election, this group will be critical. Indeed, new citizens are located in many key areas across the nation that may be considered to “swing” the electoral outcome.

The interactive website includes data at the state level but also uses the most recent 2011 American Community Survey (release on September 20, 2012) to generate estimates at the sub-state level. The tool launches just before the deadlines for voter registration in many states—and given that one important gap in electoral participation comes as a result of limited registration by naturalized citizens, the data could help target some last-minute efforts. More generally, the data help illustrate the potential importance of the immigrant vote and the report that accompanies it suggests how immigration, while not the dominant issue, can often be a key (or threshold) concern for these voters.

“We hope that the data inspires a more civil, balanced and solutions-oriented conversation about immigration—one in which realistic solutions are proposed and agreed upon so that voters can concentrate on other issues such as the economy,” said Dr. Manuel Pastor, director of USC’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration.

The online mapping tool (http://csii.usc.edu/RockTheNaturalizedVote.html) provides users with detailed explanation of the geographic location, country-of-origin, and race/ethnicity of the
naturalized voting-age population at a level not previously seen. Based on these data from the U.S. Census and the American Community Survey, the maps show newly naturalized citizens at the state and sub-state levels, using Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) geographies.

The website is accompanied by a report, “Rock the (Naturalized) Vote: The Size and Location of the Recently Naturalized Voting Age Citizen Population,” which further explains the importance of this analysis as well as the methodology used to generate the estimates at the state and sub-state level; it is available at http://csii.usc.edu/RockTheNaturalizedVote.html.

# # #