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Checklist:

- Annotated
- 3-Pt Response (complete & well-written)
- Quiz Questions (correct)

"Alien" should be dropped from government use, lawmaker proposes

By Cronkite News, adapted by Newsela staff

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Belen Sisa came to the United States from Argentina 15 years ago and now lives in Gilbert, Arizona. She says it is time to change the language used by many to describe immigrants, people who come here to live from other countries.



Sisa says that the terms “alien” and “illegal alien” are insulting and should not be used to describe immigrants. She may soon get her wish. A new bill — a proposed law — suggests that these terms should not be used by government. Instead, the phrases would be replaced with “foreign national” and “undocumented foreign national.”

An alien is a person who lives in a country but does not have citizenship there. Many are workers, students or visitors from other countries. The word "alien," however, is also used to describe a creature from another planet. Sisa, now 21, said that describing human beings that way is insulting.

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The image shows a form titled "Alien's Change of Address Card" from USCIS, Form AR-11. The form is for the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It includes a note: "NOTE: An asterisk (*) indicates a mandatory field that must be completed." The form is divided into two main sections: "Information About You" and "Information About Your Address".

Information About You

- Family Name (Last Name)
- Given Name (First Name)
- Middle Name (if applicable)
- I am in the United States as a: Visitor Student Permanent Resident Other (Specify)
- Country of Citizenship
- Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any)
- Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Information About Your Address

- Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)
- Street Number and Name
- City or Town
- State
- ZIP Code
- Physical Address
- Apt. Ste. Flz. Number

Feeling Less Than Human

She said the terms make her feel as if “I’m not a human in the eyes of other people and the eyes of the federal government.”

Joaquin Castro, a Democratic congressman from Texas, introduced the new bill, which is called the Correcting Hurtful and Alienating Names in Government Expression (CHANGE) Act, on Oct. 21. It has already attracted 87 Democratic co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and the support of numerous immigrant groups. If the bill passes the Senate and the House, it would go to President Barack Obama. If he signed it, it would become a law.

Roger Rocha Jr. is president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, one of the largest Hispanic organizations in the United States. He said that terms like "alien" are used by people who want to belittle immigrants.

He said the bill represents an important part of changing attitudes and noted that 70 percent of Americans support improving U.S. immigration law.

Following In The Footsteps Of Other Changes

This is not the first time lawmakers have wanted to remove insulting language from the law. Castro’s office pointed to Rosa’s Law, a 2010 measure that replaced references to “mental retardation” in federal law with “intellectual disability.”

Two years later Congress passed the 21st Century Language Act. That law removed the word “lunatic,” an old term for mentally ill, from use in federal law.

Both bills passed with almost the complete support of Congress. Representative Ruben Gallego, a Democrat from Arizona and a co-sponsor of the CHANGE Act, said he hopes to see the same support for this bill.

A Word That Has Become Hurtful

He said the word "alien" harms people who are going through the legal system and applying for jobs.

The bill, he said, is an effort to “use a more modern word.”

Raul Grijalva, a Democratic congressman from Arizona, also co-sponsored the bill. He said the issues of immigrants and civil rights are connected, which he said that some people do not understand.

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“You could be a fifth-generation Latino,” he said, and yet the language used about immigrants by political leaders feels racist. “It makes you less than a full American,” he said.

Sisa said the word has affected her personally. When applying for a job, she said, an interviewer told her she is “technically ... an alien” and asked if she was even allowed to apply for the job.

Looking For Understanding From Others

She said she understands why undocumented people must be characterized differently from citizens, but her hope is that the bill encourages the government to use language that is more respectful and sympathetic.

“Symbolically, it would mean that we’re taking a step forward and we’re accepting immigrants,” Sisa said of the proposed change.

And that is the message Castro promotes with the bill.

“Words matter,” he said, especially when they are about an issue as personal as immigration.

3 Point Written Response

Should we continue to use the word “alien?”

EOG Style Quiz Questions

1. Read the section "Following In The Footsteps Of Other Changes." Why is Rosa's Law mentioned in this article?

- (A) to show that people will always want to change certain terms
- (B) to show that hurtful language is an old and ongoing issue
- (C) to show that laws have changed hurtful language in the past
- (D) to show that other groups have also had to face hurtful language

2. Read the section "Feeling Less Than Human." Based on Roger Rocha Jr.'s comments in this section, he would MOST agree with which statement?

- (A) Language can affect people deeply.
- (B) Some words should just be ignored.
- (C) Words cannot actually harm someone.
- (D) People are not aware that their language can be hurtful.

3. Read these sentences from the article.

Sisa says that the terms "alien" and "illegal alien" are insulting and should not be used to describe immigrants. She may soon get her wish. A new bill — a proposed law — suggests that these terms should not be used by government.

Which answer choice uses the word "terms" in the SAME way as the sentences above?

- (A) I read the terms and conditions document on the website.
- (B) We are learning the scientific terms for the parts of a plant.
- (C) I must agree to my mother's terms before I can go out again.
- (D) Our school year is divided into two terms.

4. Read the paragraph below from the section "Looking For Understanding From Others."

"Symbolically, it would mean that we're taking a step forward and we're accepting immigrants," Sisa said of the proposed change.

Which word from the paragraph helps explain that this bill is a message or sign of acceptance?

- (A) symbolically
- (B) forward
- (C) immigrants
- (D) proposed