

REVISED on March 22, 2014
GATESOL Position Statement Opposing the Banning of
Undocumented Adults from Georgia Adult Literacy Programs

Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (GATESOL) is a non-profit organization whose goals are

- *to encourage professional development, participation, and leadership within the state of Georgia*
- *to provide opportunity for study and research*
- *to work cooperatively toward the improvement of instruction in all programs which seek to provide students with an opportunity to acquire English language skills and proficiency*
- *to promote an understanding of the cultures of non-native speakers of English.*

The United States Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and later the Supreme Court ruling of Plyler v. Doe (1982) concur that all those residing within the borders of the United States have the fundamental right to public education. In Georgia, in keeping with this mandate, adults are eligible for adult education and GED programs through state-funded adult education programs. However, House Bill 2, signed by Governor Perdue in May of 2009, limits adult education services to only those individuals who are legally documented. Since that time, thousands of students who are eager to learn have been turned away from adult literacy programs funded by the state because they are unable to show proof of legal residence. According to the US Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, From FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11, Georgia saw a 60 percent drop in adult ESL enrollment.

Research demonstrates that immigration stimulates the economy, with educated, empowered immigrant entrepreneurs often creating jobs. In his February 12, 2014 article, "A steady flow of talented, industrious immigrants can fuel a booming economy," United States Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Thomas Donohue, wrote, "Through common-sense immigration reform, we have a tremendous opportunity to help close the skills gap in our workforce, address labor shortages, strengthen our economy, and create jobs for everyone living in America."

GATESOL believes that education is a basic human right and strongly opposes the provisions in House Bill 2 that require adults to prove legal residency. GATESOL also believes that present anti-immigrant laws and policies harm economic growth and reduce future prosperity. We urge the repeal of House Bill 2, in particular the provision that prevents undocumented residents from enrolling in state funded Adult Education or GED classes, thus preventing them from improving their English or limiting their access to GED classes.