



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

Michael J. Petrucelli

Deputy Director

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Prepared Remarks
Naturalization Ceremony

Tokyo, Japan

October 18, 2004

Thank you, Consul General McKeon, for that kind introduction. It is indeed an honor to administer this ceremony today.

I would also like to thank Ambassador and Mrs. Baker for graciously hosting our ceremony in this historic residence, and Deputy Chief of Mission Michalak for his support of this event.

Let me begin by saying: it's a great day to be an American! And an even better day to become one!

Today your dream turns into reality...becoming citizens of this great nation. From today on, you will be able to fully pursue your version of the American Dream. Relish in your success, as you have truly earned it.

Candidates, let me note how very privileged I am to join you in celebrating a personal and a patriotic experience. You have all lived in the United States, but today you become full partners in the American family.

Last year, USCIS issued more than 450,000 naturalization certificates, a number that has grown steadily since September 11, 2001.

This statistic underscores an important fact about the United States: namely, that naturalized citizens in the United States are not second-class citizens. Native born or naturalized, as Americans we shoulder the same rights and the same responsibilities. In fact, immigrants contribute to every facet of American society, including the military.

With that in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to tell the service members present here today that your choice to defend our country is greatly respected at the highest levels. My boss, Secretary Tom Ridge, a Vietnam veteran and decorated infantry sergeant, understands this, and our boss, the Commander in Chief, President George W. Bush, knows it as well as anyone. I have seen it first hand.

You see, I have had the honor of administering and witnessing the Oath of Citizenship to many servicemen and women, including two who took their Oath last year at Bethesda Naval Hospital while recovering from serious combat wounds. The President and the First Lady were there.

When one of the two was asked if he had any family present, he sadly shook his head. The President then said; "I'll be your family!" The President stood by his side as we proceeded with the ceremony.

And taking a cue from the President, rest assured that even if your families are far away, we stand with you today to witness the moment and to welcome you to your American family.

Whether military or civilian, America asks much of its citizens.

President Theodore Roosevelt noted, "The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight." In expressing this idea, that democracy is synonymous with participation and service, President Roosevelt echoed the sentiments of the first democracies of classical Greece. There, a citizen was expected to be fully involved in the life of the state – to vote, to serve as a juror, to attend Assembly, to participate in festivals, to shoulder the responsibility of civic leadership when asked, and – most notably for our purposes here today – to serve in the military.

Democracies, ancient as well as modern, view citizenship as a source both of rights and of duties. American democracy, like that of ancient Rome, consciously defines citizenship around the notion of shared plutocratic values rather than the selective accidents of sex, race, religion, geography, or birth.

The military historians among you should take great comfort from this approach. Just as history teaches us that political freedom is not a universal characteristic of humankind, it also teaches us that when citizen soldiers, who ratify the conditions of their own battle service through their inclusion in the body politic, go up against forces drawn from autocratic or totalitarian states, the citizen soldiers almost always win. In war and in peace, then, the central tenants of true citizenship – participation, enfranchisement, and personal freedom – serve us well.

Candidates, this ceremony represents a milestone in your lives. Each of you came to the United States some time ago as an immigrant. Today you will receive the highest title our government can bestow on anyone – that of United States citizen.

The Great Seal of the United States features an eagle holding a ribbon in its beak imprinted with the words E Pluribus Unum – one out of many. These are not hollow words. They are words that we, as a nation, live and grow by.

Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines present for naturalized citizenship, as I call your country of origin, please stand and remain standing:

Dominican Republic

Haiti

Peru

Belarus

Korea

Philippines

Brazil

Mexico

St. Kitts and Nevis

China

Morocco

Venezuela

Colombia

Nicaragua

Guyana

Nigeria

Candidates, please raise your right hand and repeat after me the *Oath of Allegiance*:

*I hereby declare on oath,
that I absolutely and entirely
renounce and abjure
all allegiance and fidelity
to any foreign prince, potentate,
state, or sovereignty,
of whom or which
I have heretofore been
a subject or citizen.*

*That I will support and defend
the Constitution and laws
of the United States of America
against all enemies, foreign and domestic;*

*that I will bear true faith
and allegiance to the same;*

*that I will bear arms
on behalf of the United States
when required by the law;*

*that I will perform noncombatant service
in the armed forces of the United States
when required by the law;*

*that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction
when required by the law;*

*and that I will take this obligation freely
without mental reservation
or purpose of evasion;
so help me God.*

Congratulations, my fellow citizens.

God Bless you and God Bless America!