

“Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants”



Department of Homeland Security
Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services
July 1– 4, 2003



Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services**

Internet: www.bcis.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2003

**Department Marks July 4 by ‘Celebrating A Nation Of Immigrants’
*9,500 New Americans To Be Welcomed At 50 Ceremonies Nationwide***

WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of Homeland Security today launched a weeklong commemoration of the Nation’s independence that highlights the importance of legal immigration and citizenship.

As part of the commemoration, the Department’s Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) will welcome approximately 9,500 new Americans at 50 naturalization ceremonies across the United States. The theme of the ceremonies will be “Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants.”

“Welcoming new citizens to the United States is one of the most important things that we do as a nation,” Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge said. “Immigrants invigorate our national spirit and reinforce the ideals and principles that are the foundation of our great nation.”

He added, “These ceremonies are more than an opportunity to welcome our newest citizens and celebrate their contributions to our nation. They also remind us that in a troubled world the United States still stands as a beacon of hope and opportunity. We will preserve that legacy by securing our borders and protecting our citizens.”

BCIS Director Eduardo Aguirre, a naturalized U.S. citizen, stressed, “We all must be active, responsible citizens. Naturalization represents more than the willingness of Americans to welcome legal immigrants and the many benefits they bring; it also signifies the willingness of newcomers to accept the responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.”

Highlights of the weeklong celebration include:

- The kick-off in Philadelphia on July 1. Secretary Ridge and Director Aguirre will welcome approximately 1,000 new citizens from nearly 100 countries at a naturalization ceremony at the Community College of Philadelphia;
- A naturalization ceremony for 250 members of the armed forces on the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Constellation in San Diego on July 2. Director Aguirre and DHS Undersecretary Asa Hutchinson will address the new citizens;

- On Wednesday, July 2, approximately 200 citizens will take the Oath of Allegiance during a naturalization ceremony to be held in Chicago at the Herald Washington Library. DHS Undersecretary Michael Brown is the invited speaker for this event.
- The swearing in of 2,700 citizens in three separate ceremonies at the Quiet Cannon Montebello Golf Course in Los Angeles. Undersecretary Asa Hutchinson is the invited keynote speaker for the July 3 ceremonies;
- A naturalization ceremony at Boston's Faneuil Hall, dubbed "The Cradle of Liberty" because it was used by colonists to plan the anti-British tax protests that led to the Revolutionary War. Director Aguirre will swear in 350 new citizens on July 3; and
- A special children's naturalization ceremony at Walt Disney's Epcot Center on July 3. Fifty children and their parents will attend the ceremony at which DHS Undersecretary Dr. Charles McQueary will join in welcoming the newest Americans. Disney's famous mouse, Mickey will be making a special appearance during the ceremony.

The week will culminate with a number of naturalization ceremonies on July 4. These include ceremonies at the Newseum's Freedom Park in Arlington, VA, where 50 new citizens will be sworn in, and at Thomas Jefferson's estate, Monticello, where 75 new citizens will take the *Oath of Allegiance*.

Attached for reference is a complete list of naturalization ceremonies to be held during the week.

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Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants

Citizenship has long been among the most important privileges this nation can bestow. Each year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants complete the naturalization application process and take part in swearing-in ceremonies across the country. These ceremonies may involve a handful of people at a local courthouse or several thousand at a sports arena. Regardless of a ceremony's size or venue, those taking part share a common experience as they repeat the oath of citizenship, declaring their allegiance to the Constitution and loyalty to their adopted country.

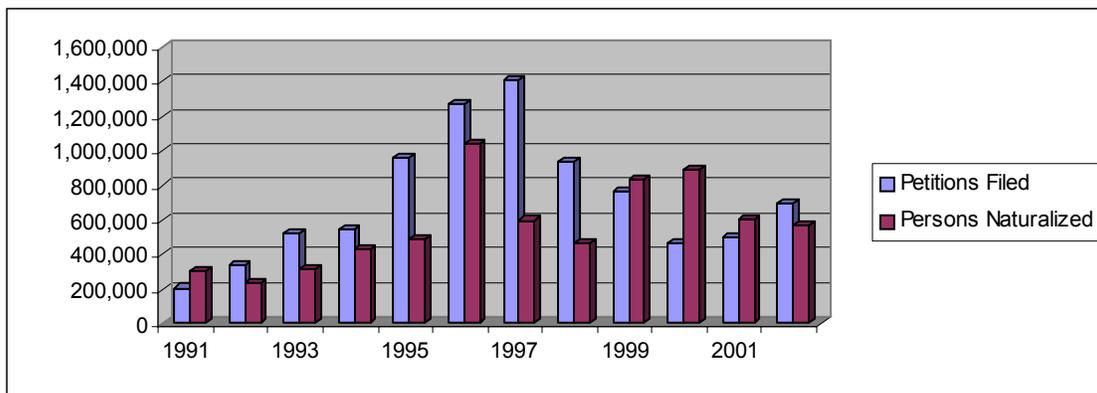
General naturalization requirements:

- ◆ at least eighteen years of age,
- ◆ have been lawfully admitted into the U.S. as a permanent resident,
- ◆ have resided here continuously for at least five years.

Citizenship Statistics

2001-2003: So far, approximately 1.4 million individuals have been naturalized during the new millennium. For this fiscal year, October 2002-April 2003, 247,700 individuals have become citizens.

1991-2000: This period saw the largest number of naturalizations of any decade in our nation's history, approximately 5.6 million individuals. In 1996, naturalizations peaked at more than one million - 1,044,689. The late 90s also marked another shift in naturalization demographics, with Mexico yielding the most naturalized citizens, followed by Vietnam and the Philippines.



Citizenship Over the Last Decade

1981-1990: Almost 2.3 million people were naturalized during the 80s. Nearly half hailed from Asia. Together Canada and Mexico accounted for more than one quarter of the remaining new citizens.

1971-1980: The U.S. welcomed approximately 1.5 million new citizens during the 70s. The Philippines, Cuba, and China were the leading countries of origin. This represented a shift from the 60s, when the largest number of new citizens came from Europe. Some 66,000 members of the U.S. military were naturalized during this decade.

Recent Executive Orders and Legislative Initiatives

Expedited Naturalization for Military Personnel (Executive Order 13269): Under this Order, legal permanent residents actively serving in the U.S. military during specified periods of hostilities are immediately eligible to apply for naturalization. President Bush designated the War on Terrorism as such a period. Since July of 2002, BCIS has processed some 7,500 requests for expedited citizenship for military applicants. In addition, field offices are also hosting special ceremonies for military personnel. Congress is currently considering additional legislation to further enhance BCIS' ability to extend naturalization benefits to members of the armed forces.

Child Citizenship Act: This act confers citizenship upon certain foreign-born children – including adopted children of U.S. citizens. In general, children who are less than 18 years old and have at least one U.S. citizen parent will benefit. Under the law, children who immigrate to the United States with a U.S. citizen parent automatically acquire citizenship. Children who live abroad acquire citizenship by application. BCIS continues to work with Congress and the adoption community to streamline the process for obtaining a Certificate of Citizenship for adopted children who are eligible for this benefit.

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services Initiatives

Backlog Reduction Team: The President has pledged \$500 million over the next four years to support BCIS' ongoing backlog reduction efforts. A team of experts is formulating a plan to maximize resources while further streamlining the processes. Currently, there are 640,000 naturalization applications pending nationwide with an average processing time of 12 months. BCIS is seeking to reduce the processing time to six months.

Pilot for the Standardization of the Citizenship Test: BCIS recently launched a pilot project to standardize the English, government, and United States history test administered to citizenship applicants. The first phase of the two-stage pilot, focusing on the English language, involves five cities – Newark, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Antonio and Atlanta.

Office of Citizenship: Efforts are underway to establish the Office of Citizenship within the BCIS. Mandated by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Office of Citizenship will develop and implement outreach and public education initiatives highlighting the relevance of United States citizenship.

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FACT SHEET

How to Become a United States Citizen

To be eligible for U.S. citizenship, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older;
- Be a Legal Permanent Resident (“Green Card” holder) for at least 5 years, or 3 years if you are married to a U.S. citizen. You may submit an Application for Naturalization to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service and (BCIS) 3 months before you reach the residency requirement;
- Be a person of good moral character;
- Be able to speak, read, write and understand ordinary English words and phrases. If you are over 55 years old and have lived in the United States as a Legal Permanent Resident for 15 years, or are over 50 years old and have lived in the United States as a Legal Permanent Resident for 20 years, you may be exempt from this requirement; and
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of U.S. history and principles of government.

You must also :

- Submit an Application for Naturalization (Form N-400) to BCIS, with the \$260 application fee, two photos, and \$50.00 fee for fingerprints. BCIS will send you an appointment to have your fingerprints taken. Then FBI will check whether you have committed a crime, which might disqualify you from naturalization;
- Be interviewed by an BCIS officer when you are scheduled for an appointment; and
- If you are approved for naturalization by the BCIS, take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America.

Special exceptions to some of the general requirements above for citizenship are available for the disabled, members of the military, veterans, spouses married to U.S. citizens living overseas, and Legal Permanent Residents who work for certain organizations that promote U.S. interests abroad. If you are the minor child (under 18 years of age) of a U.S. citizen and were born outside the United States, you may automatically be eligible for a Certificate of Citizenship. You should file an BCIS Form N-600 to receive this certificate.

To request an Application for Naturalization (Form N-400) and complete instructions, or an Application for Certificate of Citizenship (Form N-600), please call the BCIS Customer Toll Free Line at 1-800-375-5283 or download the form from the internet at <http://www.BCIS.gov>. You may also call 1-800-755-0777 for additional recorded information.

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FACT SHEET

What is Naturalization?

Naturalization is the process that confers United States citizenship upon a foreign citizen or national after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

One requirement is that a naturalization applicant must pass a test on U.S. history and government, and another test on reading, writing and speaking English. Many schools and community organizations help naturalization applicants prepare for their citizenship tests. Also, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service (BCIS) provides interactive self-tests and study guides to prepare for the U.S. government and history exams. The following are samples of test questions and answers:

- Who elects the President of the United States? *The Electoral College*
- What is the Constitution? *The supreme law of the land*
- In what year was the Constitution written? *1787*
- What do we call changes to the Constitution? *Amendments*
- Name the amendments that guarantee or address voting rights.
14th, 15th, and 19th
- What were the 13 original states of the U.S. called before they were states?
Colonies
- What were the 13 original states?
Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Georgia
- What is the executive branch of our government?
The President, the Cabinet, and departments under the cabinet members
- What are some of the basic beliefs of the Declaration of Independence?
That all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Who wrote the Star-Spangled Banner?
Francis Scott Key
- Who said "Give me liberty or give me death?"
Patrick Henry
- List the requirements to be eligible to become President.
Be a natural born citizen
Be at least 35 years old
Have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years

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FACT SHEET

Background Check

To be eligible for naturalization an applicant must be a person of good moral character. Committing crimes, or even lying during an interview, will cause an applicant to be ineligible for naturalization. Rigorous background checks, to screen for unlawful or unacceptable conduct, are part of the naturalization process. This includes interviews, collection of biographical data, and evaluation of this information against international and domestic databases.

Examples of Things that Might Show a Lack of Good Moral Character

- Any crime against a person with intent to harm
- Any crime against property or the Government that involves “fraud” or evil intent
- Two or more crimes for which the aggregate sentence was 5 years or more
- Violating any controlled substance law of the United States, any State, or any foreign country
- Habitual drunkenness or drunk driving
- Illegal gambling
- Prostitution
- Polygamy (marriage to more than one person at the same time)
- Lying to gain immigration benefits
- Failing to pay court-ordered child support or alimony payments
- Confinement in jail, prison, or similar institution for which the total confinement was 180 days or more during the past 5 years (or 3 years if you are applying based on your marriage to a United States citizen)
- Failing to complete any probation, parole, or suspended sentence before you apply for naturalization
- If you have recently been ordered deported or removed, you are not eligible for citizenship.
- Terrorist acts
- Persecution of anyone because of race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or social group

LIST OF CEREMONIES

District Office	Date of Ceremony	Time	Numb. of Citizens	Location
Buffalo	1-Jul-03	9:30a.m.	40	Naval & Military Park
Baltimore	1-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Baltimore	1-Jul-03	9:30a.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Cle/Columbus	1-Jul-03	11:00a.m.	40	USDC/Columbus, OH
Houston	1-Jul-03	5:00p.m.	50(children)	Houston, Texas
Newark	1-Jul-03	4:00p.m.	95-100	Newark
Newark/Cherryhill	1-Jul-03	3:30p.m.	10	Cherry Hills Sub-Office
New York	1-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	200	EDC, Brooklyn , NY
Oklahoma City	1-Jul-03	12:00p.m.	20	Oklahoma City
Philadelphia	1-Jul-03	TBA	1000	Philadelphia Community College
Portland, OR	1-Jul-03	2:30 p.m.	25	Portland, OR DO (Admin)
Washington, DC	1-Jul-03	2:30 p.m.	20-30	Washington DO
Atlanta	2-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	80	Atlanta
Atlanta	2-Jul-03	11:00a.m.	50	USDC, Augusta, GA
Baltimore	2-Jul-03	10:00a.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Baltimore	2-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Chicago	2-Jul-03	11:00a.m.	200	Chicago, IL
Detroit	2-Jul-03	10:00a.m.	600-700	COBO Ctr, Detroit, MI
Newark	2-Jul-03	4:00p.m.	95-100	Newark
Newark/Cherryhill	2-Jul-03	3:30p.m.	10	Cherry Hills Sub-Office
New York	2-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	200	EDC, Brooklyn , NY
Portland, OR	2-Jul-03	2:30 p.m.	25	Portland, OR DO (Admin)
San Diego	2-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	200	USS Constellation
San Jose	2-Jul-03	10:00a.m.	150	Blackstone Winery
Atlanta/Charlotte	3-Jul-03	5:00p.m.	40	South Port, NC
Baltimore	3-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Baltimore	3-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	60	Baltimore DO
Boston	3-Jul-03	11:30a.m.	400	Fanueil Hall
Boston/Hartford	3-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	50-60	City Hall, Middletown, CT
El Paso	3-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	526	El Paso, Texas
Harlingen	3-Jul-03	8:00a.m.	13	Brownsville, Texas
Indianapolis	3-Jul-03	10:00a.m.	69	Indianapolis, IN
Los Angeles	3-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	900	Quiet Cannon
Los Angeles	3-Jul-03	11:30a.m.	900	Quiet Cannon
Los Angeles	3-Jul-03	1:30p.m.	900	Quiet Cannon
Miami/Orlando	3-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	300	EPCOT Center
Miami/Tampa	3-Jul-03	10:00a.m.	50	USDC, Tampa FI
New York	3-Jul-03	9:00 a.m.	225	SDC NY, NY
New York	3-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	200	EDC, Brooklyn , NY
New York	3-Jul-03	10:30a.m.	55	New York DO
Omaha	3-Jul-03	1:00p.m.	57	Lexington, Nebraska
Portland, OR	3-Jul-03	2:30 p.m.	25	Portland, OR DO (Admin)

San Juan PR	3-Jul-03	8:00a.m.	150-200	Braulio Castillo Theatre
San Juan/CHR	3-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	50	USDC Christianstead, St. Croix
Atlanta	4-Jul-03	8:00p.m.	6	Lennox Sq. ATL., locally televised
Buffalo/Albany, NY	4-Jul-03	6:00p.m.	5 (children)	Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY
Buffalo, NY	4-Jul-03	12:00pm	45	Genesee Country Museum
Chicago	4-Jul-03	6:00p.m.	50	Hammond IN
Dallas	4-Jul-03	11:00a.m.	100	Dallas
Miami	4-Jul-03	7:00p.m.	8(children)	EOIR/Miami, FL
Miami/Jacksonville	4-Jul-03	6:00p.m.	13	Tallahassee, FL South Mountain Comm. College
Phoenix	4-Jul-03	4:30p.m.	300	Provo, Utah
Salt Lake City	4-Jul-03	8:00p.m.	30	Space Needle, Seattle
Seattle	4-Jul-03	12:00noon	500	Monticello-Charlottesville, VA
Washington, DC	4-Jul-03	11:00a.m.	75	Newseum, Arlington, VA
Washington, DC	4-Jul-03	9:00a.m.	50	