



Fact Sheet

December 15, 2005

USCIS ISSUES CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION FACTS

- According to a recent Pew Hispanic Center's report, 11.3 million naturalized citizens live in the United States.
- Nearly eight million immigrants living in the United States are eligible for naturalization.
- During fiscal year 2004 (the latest year for which complete naturalization data is available), USCIS welcomed more than 537,000 new citizens.
- Nearly seventy percent of all new citizens naturalized during FY 2004 call California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, or New Jersey home.
- More than half (fifty-four percent) of all new citizens naturalized during FY 2004 were women.
- Asia is the leading region of birth among persons naturalizing. Forty-two percent of new citizens naturalized during FY 2004 were born in Asian countries.
- Home to more than 63,000 new citizens, Mexico is the leading country of birth among persons who naturalized during FY 2004.
- Since September 11, 2001, USCIS has naturalized 24,745 military service members.
- There are approximately 40,000 immigrant military service members serving on active duty around the world. During FY 2005, USCIS naturalized 8,504 military service members. A total of 7,498 service members were naturalized stateside and a total of 1,006 service members were naturalized overseas (OCONUS). USCIS is currently working 3,472 (as of October 20, 2005) military naturalization applications.
- Since the beginning of the War of Terrorism (September 11, 2001 – Executive Order 13269), USCIS has granted posthumous citizenship to 69 military service members. Sixty-five served in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.. Four served during past conflicts (Vietnam service – 3, World War II service – 1).
- USCIS' Office of Citizenship recently introduced a New Immigrant Orientation Guide, Civics Flash Cards and other free tools to help applicants prepare for citizenship. These materials are available at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship>

Read the remarks Of Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales at the National Archives Naturalization Ceremony, December 15, 2005, below



**Delivered Remarks Of
Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales at the National Archives Naturalization
Ceremony**

December 15, 2005

It's an honor – a deep honor for me – to be with you today to help you, to join with you in commemorating this very special day, this very important day in your life and quite frankly, the life of our country.

Now, the National Archives is a fitting venue for this ceremony. The American story began with the important documents that are housed here – the Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and our Bill of Rights. Ever since, generations of immigrants, like you, have added to these first chapters in search of their own storyline in the American epic.

It is a story of hope. Hard work. Faith. Community. Adversity. Sacrifice. And ultimately, triumph.

Many of us have lived this story. We write the plot lines in the daily struggles and the personal triumphs of this great land. And while today marks a highlight in each of your chapters, this is in no way a conclusion. It is just a beginning.

You now stand ready to open the cover of opportunity, as so many have done before you. I know that each of you brings a personal story to the collective library of America. You may have arrived by a plane, by boat, or even on foot. You may have followed family, or forged ahead alone. No matter what history brought you to this point of achievement, your courage will mean a better life for you and your families. You are now another thread in the immigrant fabric of our beloved America.

My grandparents were Mexican immigrants. I remember visiting them as a very young boy – there was no telephone in their house, no television, no running hot water. My parents, too, had very little formal education. They were migrant workers who never finished elementary school, but they worked hard to educate their children. They had very little, but they gave me a great gift. They instilled in me the confidence that, if given a chance, I too could live the American dream. They raised me to believe that a Mexican-American boy from a poor neighborhood in Texas could make his own contribution to the American story.

And there hasn't been a day since – especially every time I walk into the Oval Office, to brief the most powerful person in the world, or sit down with the nation's law enforcement leaders – that I don't wonder at the gift of opportunity that I have received.

But with that opportunity comes an equally important challenge. The privilege of American citizenship brings with it special responsibilities.

As citizens, we are all called to participate. This democracy – our country – depends and thrives on the actions and contributions of the people it serves.

As citizens, you and I, we are also called upon to protect our Nation, our rights, and our freedoms. Countless immigrants have worn our Nation's uniform in battle and stood guard in times of peace. Earlier this year, the President told the country about Rafael Peralta. He was an immigrant from Mexico that enlisted in the Marine Corps the day after he received his Green Card. Sergeant Peralta knew what was necessary to safeguard the America he loved for his family – and he made the ultimate sacrifice when he died protecting his fellow Marines in Fallujah, Iraq.

Now lastly, each of us has a special responsibility to take care of our families, our communities, and ourselves. We should not overburden the collective goodwill, but strive to give more than we take from this very generous Nation. To help others achieve the same dreams that we have.

America is the greatest country in the world. There is a reason millions of people risk their lives to fulfill the dream of coming here. As you accept these new privileges of citizenship, I hope you will treasure – as I do – the opportunities that abound in this land. But I also hope that you embrace the responsibilities that we all share to preserve and extend that opportunity to all who seek the blessings of America.

I want to congratulate you again. I pray that God watch over you and your family, may God continue to guide your decisions, and may God continue to bless the United States of America – your new home.

Thank you.

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