



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
Joel W. Solomon United States Courthouse
900 Georgia Avenue
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

**NEW BEGINNINGS, NEW LIFE, NEW COUNTRY – FEDERAL COURTS CONFER
CITIZENSHIP ON NEW CITIZENS**

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This past year, 2024, saw a fresh start and new beginnings for some of our citizens, since last year these new citizens took the final step to abandon their former national citizenship and become United States citizens.

These new citizens underwent the naturalization process. Naturalization is the process by which a foreign national becomes a United States citizen. The nationalization power is within the authority of Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 of the Constitution. Accordingly, an individual must fulfill the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act to become a citizen. These requirements include filling out applications, interviewing, and passing certain tests. One of the tests is a rigorous civics test that many naturally born citizens would have difficulty passing. They must also take an oath of allegiance to the United States.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NATURALIZATION.

Naturalization is a federal responsibility. The rules require that a person seeking naturalization be over eighteen and have been a lawful permanent resident of the United States for at least five years. An individual must also show “good moral character.” This means the individual must demonstrate responsible and law-abiding conduct, which is typically measured by the absence of a criminal record and the fulfillment of financial obligations such as child support. If eligibility is met, an individual must next pay fees and complete an extensive and complex application.

Once all the preliminary processes are completed, the federal agency charged with this responsibility, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, schedules an interview. The interview process includes questions about the person’s application and background, an English language proficiency test, and a civics test. The civics questions are typically chosen randomly from a list of one hundred questions. In preparing for this test, the individuals seeking naturalization become educated in our country’s history and governmental structure. They learn about various laws and rules and reinforce concepts such as democracy, justice, equality, freedom, and the rule of law.

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY IN NATURALIZATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Federal courts play a special and important role in finalizing an individual's naturalization journey by conducting ceremonies and administering the oath. Conducting the naturalization ceremony in one of our nation's federal courtrooms aids immensely in underscoring the significance of becoming a United States citizen. Although Congress has authorized the Citizenship and Immigration Services to conduct naturalization ceremonies in their offices, applicants relish the opportunity to have their ceremony in our majestic courtrooms with their family and friends present. Naturalization ceremonies are true celebrations.

The ceremony, presided over by a federal judge, concludes with the applicants taking the oath of allegiance to the United States. This represents the culmination of the lengthy and difficult naturalization process and constitutes the applicant's formal acceptance of their new country.

Judges administer the oath of allegiance to the United States after signifying the importance of being an American citizen. The Administrative Office of the United States District Courts describes the taking of the oath as a "heartfelt pledge" and "a new sense of belonging." In taking the oath, new citizens vow to support the Constitution and laws of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. By applying for citizenship, learning civics, and taking the oath, new citizens demonstrate their commitment to the United States and its form of government.

E PLURIBUS UNUM -- "OUT OF MANY, ONE."

The typical naturalization ceremony will see people from many nations all over the world assembled together to become citizens of the United States. They all have their individual stories and reasons for desiring to become citizens. Collectively, they give real meaning to our national motto, E Pluribus Unum, "out of many, one." Although we come from vastly different locations and backgrounds and we have individual ambitions, goals, and aspirations, out of many nations and people, we are all one in our citizenship and allegiance to the country.

The federal courts play a critical role in this process. From our very earliest days as a nation, we have attracted people from all the nations of the earth to come to our country and provide their talents and efforts to making us a better and stronger nation. The federal courts' role in this process is essential.

Curtis L. Collier
United States District Judge
Chair, Eastern District of Tennessee Civics and Outreach Committee

Carrie Brown Stefaniak
Law Clerk to the Honorable Curtis L. Collier

Rachel Elaine Noveroske
Law Clerk to the Honorable Curtis L. Collier

Katherine E. Philyaw

Law Clerk to the Honorable Curtis L. Collier