

USCIS Policy Manual

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Volume 12 - Citizenship & Naturalization

Part J - Oath of Allegiance

Chapter 1 - Purpose and Background

A. Purpose

Before becoming a U.S. citizen, an eligible naturalization applicant must take an oath of renunciation and allegiance (Oath of Allegiance) in a public ceremony.^[11] The applicant must establish that it is his or her intention, in good faith, to assume and discharge the obligations of the Oath of Allegiance.^[12] The applicant must also establish that his or her attitude toward the Constitution and laws of the United States makes the applicant capable of fulfilling the obligations of the oath.^[13]

B. Background

During the naturalization interview, the applicant signs the naturalization application to acknowledge his or her willingness and ability to take the Oath of Allegiance and to accept certain obligations of United States citizenship. Under certain circumstances, an applicant may qualify for a modification or waiver of the oath.^[14] In such cases, an officer draws a line through the designated modified portions of the oath and the applicant is not required to recite the deleted portions.^[15]

Applicants must generally recite the Oath of Allegiance orally during a public ceremony. Merely signing the naturalization application and a copy of the oath does not make the applicant a U.S. citizen.

C. Legal Authorities

- [INA 310](#); [8 CFR 310.1](#) – Naturalization authority
- [INA 337](#); [8 CFR 337](#) – Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance
- [Pub. L. 106-448](#) – Waiver of Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance for Naturalization of Aliens having Certain Disabilities Act of 20

Footnotes

1. See [INA 337](#). See [8 CFR 337.1\(a\)](#).
2. See [INA 337](#). See [8 CFR 337.1\(c\)](#). Under certain circumstances, an “Affirmation of Allegiance” is the same as an Oath of Allegiance. See [8 CFR 337.1\(b\)](#).
3. See [8 CFR 337.1\(c\)](#).
4. See Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers [[12 USCIS-PM J.3](#)].
5. See [8 CFR 337.1\(b\)](#).

Chapter 2 - The Oath of Allegiance

A. Oath of Allegiance

In general, naturalization applicants take the following oath in order to complete the naturalization process:

“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 take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”^[11]

The Oath of Allegiance is administered in the English language, regardless of whether the applicant was eligible for a language waiver. However, an applicant may have a translator to translate the oath during the ceremony. In addition, an applicant may request a modification to the oath because of a religious objection or an inability or unwillingness to take an oath or recite the words “under God.”^[12] An applicant or a designated representative may request an oath waiver when the applicant is unable to understand the meaning of the oath.

B. Authority to Administer the Oath

The Secretary of Homeland Security has the authority to administer the Oath and may delegate the authority to other officials within DHS and to other employees of the United States.^[3]

The Secretary of Homeland Security has, through the Director of USCIS, delegated the authority to administer the Oath during an administrative naturalization ceremony to certain USCIS officials who can successively re-delegate the authority within their chains of command.^[4] For example, the Director delegated this authority to the Deputy Director, District Directors, and Field Office Directors. Field Office Directors may re-delegate the authority by way of a delegation memorandum to other employees within their chains of command, such as supervisory immigration services officers.

In addition, immigration judges may also administer the Oath in administrative ceremonies. During judicial naturalization ceremonies, the judge in the district of proper jurisdiction has exclusive authority to administer the Oath.

C. Renunciation of Title or Order of Nobility

Any applicant who has any titles of heredity or positions of nobility in any foreign state must renounce the title or the position. The applicant must expressly renounce the title in a public ceremony and USCIS must record the renunciation as part of the proceedings.^[5] Failure to renounce the title of position shows a lack of attachment to the Constitution.

In order to renounce a title or position, the applicant must add one of the following phrases to the Oath of Allegiance:

- I further renounce the title of (give title or titles) which I have heretofore held; or
- I further renounce the order of nobility (give the order of nobility) to which I have heretofore belonged.^[6]

An applicant whose country of former nationality or origin abolished the title by law, or who no longer possesses a title, is not required to drop that portion of his or her name that originally designated such title as a part of his or her naturalization.^[7]

Footnotes

1. See [INA 337\(a\)](#). See [8 CFR 337.1\(a\)](#).
2. See Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers [[12 USCIS-PM J.3](#)].
3. See [INA 103\(a\)\(1\)\(6\)](#). Potential exercise of Oath authority by any of the following needs to be raised through chains of command to USCIS leadership and counsel for consideration: Any elected official, including the

President, Vice President, or Members of Congress; military officers; judges (other than immigration judges or judges presiding over judicial ceremonies); or any person outside of USCIS, other than cases clearly involving the Secretary of Homeland Security’s direct use of Oath authority.

4. See [INA 310](#) and [8 CFR 310](#). See [INA 337](#) and [8 CFR 337](#). See Section II(V) of DHS Delegation 0150.1 (issued June 5, 2003).

5. See [INA 337](#).

6. See [8 CFR 337.1\(d\)](#).

7. See *Society Vinicole de Champagne v. Mumm*, 143 F. 2d 240 (1944).

Chapter 3 - Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers

The table below serves as a quick reference guide on general requirements for oath modifications and oath waiver. The sections and paragraphs that follow the table provide further guidance on each modification and oath waiver.

Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waiver		
Request	Permitted Modifications to Oath	Testimony or Evidence
Modified Oath for Religious or Conscientious Objections	Deletion of either or both of the following clauses:	
	Bearing arms on behalf of the United States if required by law [INA 337(a)(5)(A)] ; and Performing noncombatant service in the U.S. armed forces when required by law [INA 337(a)(5)(B)]	Must show opposition to clause (or clauses) based on religious training and belief or deeply held moral or ethical code. Applicant may provide an attestation or witness statement.

Affirmation of Allegiance in Lieu of Oath	Substitution of the words “solemnly affirm” for the words “on oath” and no recitation of the words “so help me God”	Not Required
	[8 CFR 337.1(b)]	
Waiver of the Oath	Requirement to take the Oath of Allegiance may be waived	Evaluation by medical professional stating inability to understand (or communicate) the meaning of the oath due to a medical condition

A. Modified Oath for Religious or Conscientious Objections

1. General Modifications to the Oath

An applicant may request a modified oath that does not contain one or both of the following clauses:

- To bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; and
- To perform noncombatant service in the U.S. armed forces when required by the law.^[11]

In order to modify the oath, the applicant must demonstrate, by clear and convincing evidence, that he or she is unwilling or unable to affirm to these sections of the oath based on his or her religious training and belief, which may include a deeply held moral or ethical code.^[12]

There is no exemption from the clause “to perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law.”^[13]

2. Qualifying for Modification to the Oath

Three-part Test

In order for an applicant to qualify for a modification based on his or her “religious training and belief,” the applicant must satisfy a three-part test. An applicant must establish that:

- He or she is opposed to bearing arms in the armed forces or opposed to any type of Service in the armed forces;
- The objection is grounded in his or her religious principles, to include other belief systems similar to traditional religion or a deeply held moral or ethical code; and

- His or her beliefs are sincere, meaningful, and deeply held.^[4]

The applicant is not eligible for a modified oath when he or she is opposed to a specific war. Religious training or belief does not include essentially political, sociological, or philosophical views. An applicant whose objection to war is based upon opinions or beliefs about public policy and the practicality or desirability of combat, or whose beliefs are not deeply held, does not qualify for the modification of the oath.

Applicant is Not Required to Belong to a Church or Religion

In addition, qualification for the exemption is not dependent upon membership in a particular religious group, nor does membership in a specific religious group provide an automatic modification to the oath. The applicant is not required to:

- Belong to a specific church or religious denomination;
- Follow a particular theology or belief; or
- Have religious training.

However, the applicant must have a sincere and meaningful belief that has a place in the applicant's life that is equivalent to that of a religious belief.^[5] Because of this belief, for example, the applicant's conscience may not rest or be at peace if allowed to become an instrument of war.^[6]

Evidence Establishing Eligibility

An applicant may provide, but is not required to provide, an attestation from a religious organization (or similar organization), witness statement, or any other evidence to establish eligibility. An applicant's oral testimony or written statement may be sufficient to qualify for the modification. An officer may ask an applicant questions regarding the applicant's beliefs in order to determine whether the applicant is eligible for the modification of the oath, to include, a review of the following factors:

- General pattern of pertinent conduct and experiences;
- Nature of applicant's objection and principles on which objection is based;
- Training in the home or a religious organization;
- Participation in religious or other similar activities; and

- Whether the applicant gained his or her ethical or moral beliefs through training, study, self-contemplation, or other activities comparable to formulating traditional religious beliefs in the home or through a religious organization.

An officer must not question the validity of what an applicant believes or the existence or truth of the concepts in which the applicant believes.^[71]

Results

Depending on the specific modified oath, USCIS deletes the relevant clauses and the applicant recites the modified form of the oath at the regularly scheduled public naturalization ceremony.^[81] An applicant is required to take the full oath if the applicant does not qualify for the modification. Otherwise, the applicant is not eligible for naturalization.

B. Affirmation of Allegiance in Lieu of Oath

An applicant may request an affirmation in lieu of an oath. The applicant may request this affirmation in lieu of an oath for any reason.^[91] In these cases:

- The applicant substitutes the words “solemnly affirm” for the words “on oath”; and
- The applicant does not recite the words “so help me God.”^[101]

USCIS grants this modification solely upon the applicant’s request. The applicant is not required to establish that the request is based solely on his or her religious training and belief. Applicants are not required to provide any documentary evidence or testimony to support a request to substitute the words “on oath” or “so help me God.”

USCIS must not require the applicant to recite the deleted portions of the Oath of Allegiance at the ceremony. The officer informs the applicant that he or she is not required to recite the deleted portions and that the applicant may take the oath in the modified form.

C. Waiver of the Oath

1. Oath of Allegiance Waiver

Oath Waiver Based on a Medical Disability

USCIS may waive the Oath of Allegiance for an applicant who is unable to understand or to communicate an understanding of its meaning because of a physical or developmental disability or mental impairment.^[111]

An applicant for whom USCIS granted an oath waiver is considered to have met the requirement of attachment to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and be well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States for the required period.

In order for USCIS to adjudicate a request for an oath waiver because of a medical disability, an applicant with the assistance of a legal guardian, surrogate, or designated representative must provide a written request and a written evaluation by an authorized medical professional.^[12] An applicant is not required to submit a specific form to request an oath waiver.^[13] USCIS accepts an oath waiver request at any point of the naturalization process.

Oath Waiver for Children under 14 Years of Age

The INA permits USCIS to waive the taking of the Oath of Allegiance if USCIS determines the person is unable to understand its meaning.^[14] USCIS has determined that children under the age of 14 are generally unable to understand the meaning of the oath. Accordingly, USCIS waives the oath requirement for a child younger than 14 years of age, at the time of naturalization. If USCIS waives the oath requirement, USCIS issues a Certificate of Citizenship after the officer approves the application.^[15]

2. Legal Guardian, Surrogate, or Designated Representative

When an applicant is unable to undergo any part of the naturalization examination because of a physical or developmental disability or mental impairment, a legal guardian, surrogate, or an eligible designated representative completes the naturalization process for the applicant. USCIS waives the Oath of Allegiance and the legal guardian, surrogate, or designated representative attests to the applicant's eligibility for naturalization.^[16] In addition to oath waiver, this process may require accommodations including off-site examinations.

For USCIS to adjudicate a request for an oath waiver, an applicant with the assistance of a legal guardian, surrogate, or designated representative, must provide a written request and a written evaluation by an authorized medical professional.^[17] USCIS accepts a request for the waiver at any point in the naturalization process until the time of the oath ceremony. As an accommodation, field offices should work with the legal guardian, surrogate, or designated representative before the initial examination to obtain all the necessary documentation.

When an oath waiver is provided, a legal guardian, surrogate, or designated representative^[18] signs on behalf of an applicant who is unable to understand or communicate an understanding of the Oath of Allegiance because of a physical or developmental disability or mental impairment. The legal guardian, surrogate, or representative acts on behalf of an applicant with a disability at every stage of the naturalization examination. The legal guardian, surrogate, or representative files the application on behalf of the applicant and must have knowledge of the facts supporting the applicant's eligibility for naturalization.

The guardian, surrogate, or representative addresses every requirement for naturalization and bears the burden of establishing the applicant's eligibility for naturalization.

Persons eligible to act on behalf of the applicant include:

- A person who a proper court has designated as the applicant's legal guardian or surrogate and who is authorized to exercise legal authority over the applicant's affairs;^[19] or

- In the absence of a legal guardian or surrogate, a U.S. citizen spouse, parent, adult son or daughter, or adult brother or sister, who is the primary custodial caregiver and who takes responsibility for the applicant.

USCIS will only recognize one designated representative in the following order of priority:[\[20\]](#)

- Legal guardian or surrogate (highest priority)
- U.S. citizen spouse
- U.S. citizen parent
- U.S. citizen adult son or daughter
- U.S. citizen adult brother or sister (lowest priority)

The person acting on behalf of the applicant must provide proof of legal guardianship, or documentation to establish the familial relationship, such as a birth certificate, marriage certificate, or adoption decree. In addition, the person must provide documentation to establish that he or she has the primary custodial care and responsibility for the applicant (for example, income tax returns, Social Security Administration documents, and affidavits from other relatives). A spouse, parent, adult son or daughter, or adult brother or sister who is not the legal guardian or surrogate must provide evidence of U.S. citizenship.

USCIS continues an application where the family member acting as a designated representative is not a U.S. citizen. USCIS explains to the family member why he or she is not qualified to act as a designated representative and offers the applicant an opportunity to bring another person who may qualify.

3. Written Evaluation

In general, USCIS requires a written evaluation to establish the applicant's inability to take the Oath of Allegiance. An applicant or designated representative requesting an oath waiver submits a written evaluation completed by a medical professional licensed to practice in the United States.

The written evaluation must:

- Be completed by the medical professional who has had the longest relationship with the applicant or is most familiar with the applicant's medical history;
- Express the applicant's medical condition and disability in terms that an officer and the designated representative can understand (except for medical definitions or terms to describe the disability);

- State why and how the applicant is unable to understand or communicate an understanding of the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance because of the disability;
- Indicate the likelihood of the applicant being able to communicate or demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the Oath of Allegiance in the near future; and
- Be signed by the medical professional completing the written evaluation and contain his or her state license number authorizing the medical professional to practice in the United States.

USCIS will not require medical professionals to provide an explanation of how they reached their diagnosis, a listing of clinical or laboratory techniques used to reach the diagnosis, or supporting documentation to establish the claimed disability. USCIS, however, will require the medical professional to provide a thorough explanation of how the applicant's disability impairs his or her functioning so severely that the applicant is unable to demonstrate an understanding of the oath requirements or communicate an understanding of its meaning.

USCIS reserves the right to request documentation if there is a question upon examination about the applicant's disability and ability to understand the oath requirement. If USCIS approves the oath waiver, USCIS does not require the applicant to appear in a public ceremony.

Footnotes

1. See [INA 337\(a\)\(5\)\(A\)](#) and [INA 337\(a\)\(5\)\(B\)](#).
2. The Supreme Court has addressed the meaning of "religious training and belief" in the context of exemptions from military service under section 6(j) of the Universal Military Training and Service Act." See *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970) (holding that Welsh, who characterized his beliefs as nonreligious and expressed doubt in the existence of a Supreme Being, was entitled to a conscientious objector exemption to military service because his beliefs occupied a parallel place in his life to that of religious convictions); *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) (stating that the applicable test for determining whether someone's belief was based on religious training and belief was whether the belief was sincere and meaningful and "occup[ied] in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualifying for the exemption"). See [INA 337\(a\)](#) which contains virtually the same language regarding religious training and belief as was addressed by the Supreme Court in *Welsh* and *Seeger*.
3. See [INA 337\(a\)\(5\)\(C\)](#).
4. See [INA 337](#). See *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970). See *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965).
5. See *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970). See *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965).

6. See *Welsh v. United States*, 398 U.S. 333 (1970).
7. See *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965): “The validity of what he believes cannot be questioned. Some theologians, and indeed some examiners, might be tempted to question the existence of the registrant’s ‘Supreme Being’ or the truth of his concepts. But these are inquiries foreclosed to Government.”
8. See Chapter 1, Purpose and Background, Section A, Purpose [[12 USCIS-PM J.1\(A\)](#)]. See [INA 337](#). See [8 CFR 337.1\(b\)](#).
9. The INA indicates that the affirmation is requested “by reason of religious training and belief (or individual interpretation thereof), or for other reasons of good conscience.” See [INA 337\(a\)](#).
10. See [8 CFR 337.1\(b\)](#).
11. See [INA 337\(a\)](#). See [Pub. L. 106-448](#) enacted on July 12, 2000.
12. For information on who is an authorized medical professional, see Part E, English and Civics Testing and Exceptions, Chapter 3, Medical Disability Exception (Form N-648), Section C, Authorized Medical Professionals [[12 USCIS-PM E.3\(C\)](#)].
13. The oath waiver requirements are distinct from the requirements for the medical exception to the English and civics requirements for naturalization under [INA 312\(b\)](#), which requires an applicant to submit a medical exception form. See Part E, English and Civics Testing and Exceptions, Chapter 3, Medical Disability Exception (Form N-648) [[12 USCIS-PM E.3](#)].
14. See [INA 337\(a\)](#). See [8 CFR 341.5\(b\)](#).
15. See Part H, Children of U.S. Citizens [[12 USCIS-PM H](#)].
16. See Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers [[12 USCIS-PM J.3](#)].

17. For the definition of an authorized medical professional, see Part E, English and Civics Testing and Exceptions, Chapter 3, Medical Disability Exception (Form N-648), Section C, Authorized Medical Professionals [[12 USCIS-PM E.3\(C\)](#)].
18. See Chapter 3, Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers [[12 USCIS-PM J.3](#)].
19. A legal guardian or surrogate may act on behalf of an applicant regardless of the legal guardian or surrogate's immigration status or whether he or she is a family member.
20. If there is a conflict in priority between two or more persons seeking to represent the applicant, and the individuals share the same degree of familial relationship, USCIS gives priority to the person who is older.

Chapter 4 - General Considerations for All Oath Ceremonies

A. USCIS Administrative Ceremony

USCIS field offices conduct administrative ceremonies at regular intervals as frequently as is necessary. USCIS must conduct ceremonies in such a manner as to preserve the dignity and significance of the occasion. In some instances, USCIS offices may conduct daily ceremonies where the examination, adjudication, and the oath take place on the same day. District Directors and Field Office Directors must ensure that administrative ceremonies conducted by USCIS in their districts comply with the USCIS "Model Plan for Naturalization Ceremonies."^[11]

An applicant must appear in person at a public ceremony unless USCIS excuses the appearance. USCIS designates the time and place for the ceremony and conducts the ceremony within the proper jurisdiction. USCIS presumes an applicant to have abandoned his or her naturalization application when the applicant fails to appear for more than one oath ceremony.^[12] In such cases, USCIS executes and issues a motion to reopen and may deny the application if the applicant has not responded within 15 days.^[13]

B. Derogatory Information Received before Oath or Failure to Appear

An officer must execute a motion to reopen a previously approved naturalization application if:

- USCIS receives or identifies disqualifying derogatory information about the applicant after approval of his or her application prior to the administration of the Oath of Allegiance;^[14] or
- An applicant fails to appear for at least two ceremonies to take the Oath of Allegiance without good cause.^[15]

USCIS notifies the applicant in writing about the receipt of derogatory information or multiple failures to appear through the motion to reopen. The applicant has 15 days to respond to the

motion to reopen and overcome the derogatory information or provide good cause for failing to appear at the Oath ceremony.^[6]

USCIS must not schedule an applicant for the administration of the Oath of Allegiance if USCIS receives or identifies disqualifying derogatory information. USCIS must not administer the Oath of Allegiance to the applicant until the matter is resolved favorably.

If the applicant overcomes the derogatory information and qualifies for naturalization, the officer approves the application and schedules the applicant for the Oath of Allegiance. If the applicant is unable to overcome the derogatory information, the officer grants the motion to reopen and denies the application on its merits.^[7]

An applicant who fails to appear for at least two ceremonies to administer the Oath of Allegiance, without good cause, abandons his or her intent to be naturalized. USCIS considers multiple failures to appear to be equivalent to receipt of derogatory information after the approval of a naturalization application.^[8]

Footnotes

1. See Chapter 5, Model Plan for Administrative Naturalization Ceremonies [[12 USCIS-PM J.5](#)].
2. See [8 CFR 337.10](#).
3. See Part B, Naturalization Examination, Chapter 5, Motion to Reopen [[12 USCIS-PM B.5](#)]. See [8 CFR 335.3\(a\)](#) and [8 CFR 337](#).
4. See [8 CFR 335.5](#).
5. See [8 CFR 337.10](#).
6. See [8 CFR 335.5](#).
7. See [8 CFR 336.1](#).
8. See [8 CFR 337.10](#).

Chapter 5 - Administrative Naturalization Ceremonies

USCIS is committed to elevating the importance of the naturalization ceremony as a venue to recognize the rights, responsibilities, and importance of citizenship and provide access to services for new citizens. The naturalization ceremony is the culmination of the naturalization process. USCIS aims to make administrative naturalization ceremonies positive and memorable moments in the lives of the participants. USCIS honors the Oath of Allegiance with policies and practices that reflect the importance of the occasion.

The following information provides USCIS officials with guidance for conducting administrative naturalization ceremonies in a meaningful and consistent manner.^{[11](#)}

A. Materials Distributed

USCIS may distribute materials at administrative naturalization ceremonies, including:

- U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet (including the President's Congratulatory Letter);
- American flag;
- Citizen's Almanac ([Form M-76](#)); and
- Pocket-size Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

1. Contents of U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet

USCIS distributes the U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet (Form M-771) to every naturalization candidate participating in an administrative ceremony in the United States.^{[12](#)}

The U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet consists of the following:

- President's, Secretary's, or Director of USCIS' Congratulatory Letter and Envelope;
- Application for U.S. Passport ([Form DS-11](#));
- Important Information for New Citizens (Form M-767);
- Oath of Allegiance/The Star Spangled Banner/Pledge of Allegiance Flier (Form M-789);
- Certificate Holder; and

- A Voter's Guide to Federal Elections.

The official congratulatory letters from the President of the United States, Secretary of Homeland Security, or Director of USCIS are the only congratulatory letters USCIS distributes at naturalization ceremonies. Guests, elected officials, other U.S. government entities, and non-governmental organizations may not provide candidates with congratulatory letters within the venue.

2. Distribution of U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet

USCIS may distribute the U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet during the check-in process before the naturalization candidate has been administered the Oath of Allegiance but only after a USCIS officer has determined that the applicant is eligible to take the Oath of Allegiance on the day of the ceremony.^[3]

The U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet contains information for naturalized citizens. Before distributing the packet, officers must:

- Make a statement that an applicant does not become a U.S. citizen until he or she takes the Oath of Allegiance, regardless of the contents of the packet;
- Make a general statement about the contents of the packet; and
- Answer the candidates' naturalization-related questions.

3. The American Flag

Officers distribute the American flag to naturalization candidates. Only USCIS-issued flags made in the United States may be distributed to naturalization candidates.

4. Citizen's Almanac and Pocket-size U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution

The Citizen's Almanac ([Form M-76](#)) and the Pocket-size Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States (Form M-654) must be made available to all interested naturalization candidates or newly naturalized citizens at the:

- Check-in process;
- Conclusion of the oath ceremony program; or
- Conclusion of the naturalization examination.

Officers are not required to distribute these publications to each naturalization candidate, but must make the publications available. The items may be placed on a table in an area accessible to the naturalization candidates. USCIS may also inform candidates that both publications are available for download at www.uscis.gov/citizenship.

5. Other Materials

USCIS field office leadership must consult with the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division to determine whether materials and publications other than the American flag and the contents of the U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet are appropriate for distribution. Federal workers, including officers, and other invited participants, whether governmental or non-governmental, must never distribute the following within the venue where the USCIS naturalization ceremony is taking place, or anywhere within a federal facility or on federal property:

- Partisan publications;
- Publications referencing a specific political group;
- Commercial materials or publications;
- Religious materials or publications; or
- Any promotional or solicitation materials or publications.

Authorized non-U.S. governmental organizations invited by USCIS to distribute materials or publications, such as voter registration organizations, may provide USCIS-authorized materials at the conclusion of the naturalization ceremony.

Similarly, other authorized U.S. government participants, such as the Department of State's Passport Services Division, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Social Security Administration may distribute USCIS-authorized materials within the venue after the USCIS official has concluded the naturalization ceremony. Only USCIS-approved materials and publications may be distributed within the venue once the presiding USCIS official has concluded the naturalization ceremony.

B. Ceremony Check-In Process

USCIS officers perform the ceremony check-in process before the start of the ceremony. An officer reviews the responses on each naturalization candidate's Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony (Form N-445) and updates responses as necessary. Once the officer verifies each candidate's eligibility for naturalization, the officer then collects all USCIS-issued travel documents and lawful permanent resident cards from each candidate.

C. Ceremony Program

To standardize the naturalization ceremony experience, unless exempted, USCIS offices follow these steps in all administrative ceremonies: [\[4\]](#)

- Play “Faces of America;”
- Play the national anthem, The Star Spangled Banner, instrumental or vocal version; [\[5\]](#)
- Deliver opening (welcoming) remarks by Master of Ceremonies; [\[6\]](#)
- Announce the “call of countries;” [\[7\]](#)
- Administer the Oath of Allegiance to the naturalization candidates; [\[8\]](#)
- Deliver keynote remarks (USCIS leadership or guest speaker);
- Play Presidential, Secretary’s, or Director of USCIS’ congratulatory remarks;
- Recite the Pledge of Allegiance;
- Deliver concluding remarks (Master of Ceremonies or USCIS field leadership); [\[9\]](#) and
- Present the Certificate of Naturalization (Form N-550) by USCIS leadership or officers. [\[10\]](#)

The Naturalization Ceremony Presentation [\[11\]](#) includes all required video and musical elements the office plays at various points in the naturalization ceremony program.

Field offices may also enhance the ceremony program with additional appropriate elements, such as approved musical selections included in the Naturalization Ceremony Presentation. When USCIS plays musical selections during ceremonies, naturalization applicants are not required to stand or sing.

D. Guest Speakers

USCIS welcomes distinguished community members who are U.S. citizens by birth or naturalization to participate as guest speakers in administrative naturalization ceremonies. A guest speaker may be a:

- Civic leader;
- Government leader;
- Military leader;
- Member of Congress;
- Judge;
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official; or
- A person whom USCIS deems appropriate for the occasion.

Local USCIS field leadership must carefully review and select guest speakers based on their relevance to the occasion, with particular focus on their outstanding achievements, contributions to the nation or their community, personal experience, or notable activities as a citizen of the United States.

USCIS field leadership must review the qualifications of any potential guest speaker who is not a DHS employee, and approve his or her role in the program before he or she speaks at an administrative naturalization ceremony.^[12] If USCIS headquarters selects a guest speaker for a USCIS field office's administrative naturalization ceremony, headquarters will review the person's qualifications before making the recommendation.

It is the responsibility of field leadership of the USCIS office conducting the administrative naturalization ceremony to preserve the importance, dignity, and solemnity of the occasion. After selecting and scheduling a guest speaker, the local field leadership must send the speaker a written notice, which describes USCIS's expectations regarding the appropriate length and content of remarks. USCIS must advise speakers that appropriate remarks focus on:

- Importance of U.S citizenship;
- New privileges (such as the ability to travel with a U.S. passport, apply for a position in the federal government, and vote in federal elections);
- Responsibilities of U.S. citizenship (such as voting and serving on a jury when requested);

- Civic principles within the U.S. government;
- Civic participation in the local community;
- Importance of swearing allegiance to the United States; or
- Theme of the ceremony.

Inappropriate remarks, including political (partisan or otherwise), religious, or commercial statements, are not permitted.^[13] Out of respect for the candidates and other attendees, guest speakers serving in the keynote role should deliver remarks between 5 and 10 minutes in length. If a scheduled guest speaker is unable to participate, USCIS must approve any replacement speaker.

USCIS respects the privacy of applicants and may not release the names or personal information of applicants for naturalization unless the applicant provides consent or disclosure required by law.

E. Participation by Elected Officials and Members of Congress

1. Elected Officials

USCIS must uphold the integrity of each administrative naturalization ceremony and ensure that it is a politically neutral event. The presence of candidates for public office at a naturalization ceremony may create a perception that is inconsistent with USCIS's obligation of neutrality. Accordingly, candidates for public office, including incumbents, generally may not speak at or participate in an administrative naturalization ceremony starting from 3 months immediately preceding a primary or general election for office.

For example, if the state primary elections are on February 4, 2014, and the state general election is November 3, 2014, a candidate for public office in those primary elections may not be a guest speaker or have another formal participatory role from November 4, 2013 (3 months before the primary election) until after February 4, 2014. A candidate for the general election may not have a participatory role from August 3, 2014 (3 months before the general election) until after November 3, 2014.^[14]

The 3-month rule does not apply to the President or Vice President of the United States. However, the 3-month rule does apply to Members of Congress. In exceptional circumstances, the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division may authorize exceptions to the 3-month rule if the candidate's participation, subject to any appropriate conditions, would not unduly compromise the ceremony's political neutrality and would serve the best interest of USCIS and enhance the ceremony. For any exceptions or issues relating to the 3-month rule, field leadership should contact the Office of Chief Counsel's Ethics Division.

2. Members of Congress

USCIS congressional liaisons coordinate with USCIS district or field office leadership regarding invitations to and requests from Members of Congress to participate in administrative naturalization ceremonies.

Congressional liaisons and the Field Operations Directorate must provide ample notice when issuing invitations to or responding to requests from Members of Congress to serve as guest speakers in naturalization ceremonies. In the event a Member of Congress is unable to serve as a guest speaker after accepting an invitation to do so, only USCIS may select an appropriate substitute.

When a congressional liaison issues an invitation to a Member's office, the invitation must include USCIS guidelines for administrative naturalization ceremonies.^[15] Members of Congress scheduled to speak at administrative naturalization ceremonies must follow USCIS' guidance for guest speakers.^[16] Members of Congress may not distribute any materials at a USCIS naturalization ceremony or inside the ceremony venue.^[17]

Some members of Congress may ask USCIS to schedule naturalization ceremonies to mark particular dates or events of significance to the United States or the U.S. state being represented. USCIS district office or field office leadership may, at their discretion, honor these requests, subject to restrictions for guest speakers.^[18]

District office or field office leadership must decline the request if there is any possibility of the event being seen as a platform for any political, controversial, religious, or commercial message. District office or field office leadership may also decline the request if supporting such a ceremony would negatively impact other activities or otherwise present operational hardships.

When a member of Congress asks USCIS to schedule a naturalization ceremony, USCIS responds in writing. If the request is to be honored, the response will provide expectations and restrictions regarding speech for guest speakers.^[19] If the request is to be declined, USCIS will provide a reason and a copy of the ceremony guidance.

Members of Congress and their staff are always welcome to attend a naturalization ceremony as members of the public.

F. Voter Registration After Naturalization Ceremonies

1. Distribution of Voter Registration Applications^[20]

The ability to vote in federal elections is both a right and a responsibility that comes with U.S. citizenship.^[21] All newly naturalized citizens must be given the opportunity to register at the end of the administrative naturalization ceremony when the new citizen is then eligible to register to vote.^[22]

The options for distribution of voter registration applications are (in preferential order):

- State or local government election offices distribute and collect voter registration applications for an election official to review and officially register the person to vote;
- Non-governmental organizations distribute and collect voter registration applications for an election official to review and officially register the person to vote;^[23] or
- In the absence of the above options, USCIS provides voter registration applications to all new citizens. USCIS is not responsible for the collection of applications or any other activities related to voter registration.

2. Voter Registration Services

The term “voter registration services” includes one or more of the following activities:

- Distribution of voter registration application forms;
- Assisting interested applicants in completing voter registration application forms;
- Reviewing submitted forms to ensure that each form is complete;
- Collecting completed forms for submission to the local election official; or
- Providing non-partisan educational information on the voting process.^[24]

The mechanism for registration may vary by ceremony location, but in every case must take place only after the conclusion of the ceremony, when the candidates are officially U.S. citizens.

If no space is available for governmental or non-governmental entities to provide on-site voter registration services, the USCIS field office distribute voter registration applications to each newly naturalized citizen.^[25] USCIS bases a “no space available” determination on the location of the ceremony, the size of the facility, and the number of applicants naturalizing, as well as the layout of the space. “No space available” determinations are made on a case-by-case basis by USCIS field leadership conducting the ceremony.

3. Registration by Non-governmental Organizations

In-person voter registration services by the state or local election office is optimal. If state or local election officials are unable to participate, all interested non-governmental groups may seek the privilege of offering voter registration services at administrative naturalization ceremonies. To qualify, non-governmental organizations must be:

- Non-profit;

- Non-partisan; and
- Approved by USCIS field leadership.

All interested non-governmental organizations seeking to offer voter registration services must submit a written request to the local USCIS Field Office Director at least 60 days prior to the ceremony, including a statement that those participating in the registration process have received proper training on how to register voters. The written request must address all of the criteria indicated below. Field leadership provides a written response to each request after consultation with the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division, at least 30 days prior to the date of the ceremony.^[26]

Field leadership must consider requests from all interested non-governmental organizations seeking to participate in the ceremony and must offer equal, non-preferential opportunities to all qualified and approved non-governmental organizations. If multiple organizations seek to provide voter registration services at USCIS administrative naturalization ceremonies, USCIS field leadership may establish a rotating participation schedule.

When USCIS determines that an organization is qualified and is approved to participate in voter registration services at an administrative naturalization ceremony, field leadership sends the organization a letter, listing specific requirements for participation. Field leadership then contacts the organization to determine its availability to participate in scheduled administrative ceremonies.

While participating, non-governmental organizations and their representatives must not:

- Attempt to influence or interfere with a person's right to register to vote, or to vote;^[27]
- Participate in any political activity, partisan or otherwise, regardless of whether the ceremonies take place on federal or non-federal property;^[28]
- Engage in religious or commercial solicitation or promotion of any kind;
- Discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, or veteran status;^[29]
- Collect, retain, or share the personal information of those registered to vote at naturalization ceremonies, even if this information is requested on a voluntary basis;
- Use the information provided on voter registration applications for any purpose other than voter registration;^[30] or

- Alter completed voter registration materials in any manner. [\[31\]](#)

While participating, non-governmental organizations and their representatives must:

- Safeguard all personal information new citizens provide for voter registration;
- Follow scheduling and logistical requirements set forth by USCIS field leadership;
- Have received recent proper training on how to register voters;
- Receive an on-site briefing from field leadership regarding rules for that particular facility;
- Wear professional attire and represent themselves and their organization professionally; and
- Wear nametags that include the name of the organization while registering voters (no other identification of the organization may be worn or displayed).

4. Revocation of Participation Privilege

If a non-governmental organization fails to comply with the above requirements for participation, field leadership, in consultation with the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division, may revoke the privilege to participate and exclude the organization from participating in future administrative naturalization ceremonies.

In addition, if a USCIS official receives a complaint from a newly naturalized citizen, guest of a newly naturalized citizen, or the state or local election office regarding an organization's inappropriate behavior or lack of ability to properly provide voter registration services, field leadership, in consultation with the USCIS Office of Chief Counsel's Ethics Division, may revoke the privilege to participate upon appropriate inquiry and review of the circumstances.

5. Points-of-Contact for Voting and Voter Registration

If naturalized citizens have questions regarding voting and voter registration, USCIS refers them to:

- The governmental or non-governmental organization offering voter registration services on-site;
- Other information resources within the local area; or
- The official [USA.gov Register to Vote](#) government web site.

G. Services Provided by Other Government Entities

Federal entities, such as the Department of State's Passport Services Division, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Social Security Administration, as well as state and local governments, may be authorized to provide information and make services available to newly naturalized citizens and their guests at the conclusion of the administrative naturalization ceremony. ^[32] Governmental entities that desire representation at administrative naturalization ceremonies must seek advance approval from field leadership of the USCIS office conducting the ceremony.

H. Participation of Volunteers and Civic Organizations

Field leadership may permit volunteers from the community, community-based organizations, and civic organizations to participate in various roles during the administrative naturalization ceremony. For example, Field leadership may have the U.S. armed forces color guard perform the presentation of colors and the national anthem or have volunteers lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Field leadership will determine the appropriate level of participation for the occasion. However, under no circumstances will any non-USCIS employee perform any USCIS function. ^[33]

Field leadership must review the qualifications, designate the level of participation, and oversee the participation of all volunteers and organizations during the administrative naturalization ceremony. In addition, non-USCIS participants must not engage in political, religious, or commercial activity of any kind.

I. Offers to Donate Use of Facilities

USCIS must use neutral facilities ^[34] that are not specific to any religion, commercial enterprise, or political affiliation. In addition, administrative naturalization ceremonies should not be held as a part of, or in conjunction with, conventions or conferences.

USCIS must maintain the importance, dignity, and solemnity of naturalization ceremonies. Administrative naturalization ceremonies should always be the focus and main event, and should always be held at facilities that are neutral and appropriate. USCIS may not use:

- Religious facilities (for example, space in or connected to a place of worship);
- Facilities of an organization that practices immigration law;
- Facilities of an organization that is active in immigration legislation or political advocacy;
- Facilities of an organization that represents petitioners and applicants before DHS;

- Facilities where USCIS personnel cannot protect secure documents; or
- Facilities that may compromise the importance, dignity, and solemnity of the occasion.

USCIS employees must not solicit a gift (including use of facilities to hold an administrative naturalization ceremony) from any non-federal entity. However, USCIS may accept an unsolicited gift with the concurrence of the USCIS Field Operations Associate Director, the USCIS Office of Chief Counsel's Ethics Division, and approval of the USCIS Director.

In addition, USCIS must not use a donated facility from a prohibited source to include:

- Persons or organizations seeking official action by USCIS;[\[35\]](#)
- Persons or organizations doing business or seeking to do business with USCIS;
- Persons or organizations regulated by USCIS or DHS; or
- Persons or organizations with interests that may substantially affect the performance or nonperformance of the official duties of USCIS or USCIS employees.

1. Submission of Offer

The donor must submit all required documents to the Field Operations Directorate at least 4 weeks in advance of the ceremony date to guarantee timely processing. The donor must include the following documents in the gift offer request:

- An invitation letter (preferably on the organization's letterhead);
- A completed Offer of Gift from Non-Governmental Sources (Form G-1194).[\[36\]](#)

In addition to the donor's submission, an officer must submit the following documents for approval:

- Gift offer memorandum (memo to the USCIS Director from the Field Operations Associate Director, and including the requesting USCIS Region, District, and Field Office); and
- DHS, Gift Donation Form (Form 112-02-001).[\[37\]](#)

2. Review of Offer

After receipt, an authorized official reviews the documents for accuracy and consistency. The following officials then review and consider for approval the gift offer (in order of review):

- USCIS Field Operations, Associate Director;

- USCIS Office of Chief Counsel's Ethics Division; and

- USCIS Director (final approval).

Field leadership may accept a gift offer or donated facility for ceremony use from a federal, state, or local governmental agency without the approval of the USCIS Director. However, before accepting such an offer, field leadership must consider if acceptance would create a conflict of interest. Field leadership should confer with the Field Operations Directorate at headquarters and the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division before accepting gifts or a donated facility.

3. Rejection of Offer

USCIS may reject an offer of use of facilities if:

- The gift offer would not aid or facilitate the mission of USCIS and DHS;
- The acceptance of the gift would create or appear to create a conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest;
- The donor seeks to obtain or conduct business with USCIS or DHS;
- The donor conducts operations or activities that are regulated by USCIS or DHS;
- The acceptance of the gift or use of the donated facility would reflect unfavorably upon the ability of the agency, or any employee of the agency, to carry out USCIS and DHS responsibilities or official duties in a fair and objective manner;
- The acceptance of the gift or use of the donated facility would compromise the integrity or the appearance of the integrity of USCIS or DHS programs or any official involved in those programs;
- The acceptance of the gift or use of the donated facility would violate, or create the appearance of a violation of the Hatch Act;^{[\[38\]](#)}
- The acceptance of the gift or use of the donated facility might reasonably create the appearance of preferential treatment or official endorsement of an outside entity; or

- The acceptance of the gift or use of the donated facility would be inconsistent with USCIS' interest in upholding the importance, dignity, and solemnity of the occasion.

The authorized agency officials may consider various factors, including the following, in their determination:

- The identity of the donor;
- The monetary or estimated market value or the cost to the donor;
- The purpose of the gift as described in any written statement or oral proposal by the donor;
- The identity of any other expected recipients of the gift on the same occasion, if any;
- The timing of the gift;
- The number of times the donor has offered gifts to USCIS;
- The nature and sensitivity of any matter pending before the agency that may affect the interest of the donor;
- The importance or consequence of an individual employee's role in any matter affecting the donor (for example, if benefits of the gift will accrue to the employee); and
- The nature of the offered gift.

At the end of the gift offer process, USCIS provides notification of the acceptance or rejection of the gift offer to the appropriate person or organization.

J. Coordination with External Organizations

When USCIS hosts an administrative naturalization ceremony^[39] in which an external organization (such as another federal agency or a local community-based organization) plays a role,^[40] USCIS is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the event is important, dignified, and solemn. While USCIS welcomes participation from external organizations, USCIS does not formally co-host ceremonies with external organizations. The naturalization ceremony must always be the focus of any program.

1. USCIS Responsibilities

In conducting administrative ceremonies, USCIS is responsible for the following:

- Approving the ceremony facility – USCIS follows internal policies and procedures regarding the use of space, including donations of space.^[41] Prior to selecting the facility, USCIS reserves the right to conduct a site visit of the proposed space.
- Planning the ceremony – USCIS determines the ceremony program, including the order of events, the order of speakers, and the seating arrangements of the speakers on stage.
- Ensuring the ceremony remains the focus of the event.
- Ensuring proper use and placement of the DHS seal and signature according to approved guidelines.^[42] When coordinating with an external entity, USCIS must avoid perceived endorsement.
- Selecting, inviting, and approving guest speakers – USCIS must approve all guest speakers. While the collaborating organization may recommend guest speakers to USCIS, the selection is at the discretion of USCIS. USCIS may request to review guest speaker remarks in advance of the ceremony for content and length. Inappropriate remarks, including political (partisan or otherwise), commercial, or religious statements, are not permitted.^[43]
- Determining which naturalization candidates will participate in the ceremony – Organizations may not request that specific lawful permanent residents (LPRs) be naturalized at any ceremony (for example, only LPRs from a particular country). USCIS does not consider such requests, which may create a conflict of interest or the appearance of preferential treatment to specific LPRs.
- Ensuring that voter registration applications are offered to new citizens at the end of the ceremony.^[44]
- Selecting and approving organizations requesting to distribute voter registration applications, and the methods by which such efforts are to be conducted.
- Preserving the importance, dignity, and solemnity of naturalization ceremonies.

USCIS may brief all ceremony participants on expected behavior.

2. External Organizations

The external organization is responsible for:

- Following all USCIS policies and procedures, including guidance from field leadership.
- Seeking approval from USCIS prior to distributing any materials at the ceremony. If the external organization wishes to distribute American flags to ceremony guests, those flags should be made in the United States. USCIS provides flags for all naturalization candidates.
- Coordinating with USCIS on media coverage of the naturalization ceremony.

3. Conferences and Conventions

USCIS may not schedule a ceremony as part of, or in conjunction with, another organization's event, including conferences or conventions. USCIS may determine it is operationally feasible to hold a naturalization ceremony in which conference or convention participants are invited to attend, but the ceremony must remain a separate event.

Footnotes

1. This guidance applies only to administrative naturalization ceremonies involving an Application for Naturalization ([Form N-400](#)) where a USCIS-designated official or an immigration judge administers the Oath of Allegiance. The guidance does not apply to administrative ceremonies involving children obtaining evidence of citizenship -- Application for Citizenship ([Form N-600](#)) or Application for Citizenship and Issuance of Certificate Under Section 322 ([Form N-600K](#)) -- or judicial naturalization ceremonies where a federal, state, or local court administers the Oath of Allegiance.
2. To the extent practicable, U.S. Citizenship Welcome Packet (Form M-771) will also be distributed to candidates participating in naturalization ceremonies overseas, subject to circumstances such as the location of the ceremony and the capacity of the military member to carry the materials.
3. See Section B, Ceremony Check-in Process [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(B\)](#)], and Section C, Ceremony Program [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(C\)](#)].
4. USCIS offices are exempt from implementing the ceremony program when conducting a home visit, or an expedited administrative naturalization ceremony. See Chapter 6, Judicial and Expedited Oath Ceremonies [[12 USCIS-PM J.6](#)].

5. USCIS offices may incorporate a live performance as an alternative to the version on the video. If any proprietary versions of the national anthem, or any other songs, are being used, the user must ensure that the intellectual property rights of the holder(s) are respected, and the necessary legal permissions are acquired.
6. Opening (welcoming) remarks include, but are not limited to, an introduction of ceremony principals and an overview of the ceremony program.
7. The designated official reads aloud a list of countries represented by the naturalization candidates' former nationalities.
8. See Chapter 2, The Oath of Allegiance [[12 USCIS-PM J.2](#)]. See [INA 337](#). See [8 CFR 337.1\(a\)](#) and [8 CFR 337.1\(b\)](#).
9. Concluding remarks may include, but are not limited to, expressing appreciation to those family and friends in attendance, acknowledging the achievement of the naturalized citizens, announcing the services of those governmental and non-governmental entities in attendance, and explaining the distribution method for the certificates of naturalization.
10. Only USCIS leadership and officers may present the Certificates of Naturalization to the naturalized U.S. citizens.
11. The presentation is provided to all field offices in an electronic format and includes a PowerPoint and video materials.
12. Certain prominent guest speakers, which may include elected officials and cabinet members, should receive their invitation to speak from USCIS leadership at headquarters. Therefore, local field leadership should coordinate with headquarters as early as possible and list ceremony details in the National Ceremony Scheduler.
13. If a guest speaker makes inappropriate remarks during an administrative naturalization ceremony, field leadership should inform the speaker and notify the appropriate USCIS supervisor or manager. If the guest speaker does not indicate a willingness to modify his or her remarks in the future, field leadership should not accept requests from the person to speak at future administrative naturalization ceremonies.
14. See [5 U.S.C. 7321-7326](#) (Hatch Act).

15. See Chapter 5, Administrative Naturalization Ceremonies [[12 USCIS-PM J.5](#)].
16. See Section D, Guest Speakers [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
17. See Section A, Materials Distributed, Subsection 5, Other Materials [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(A\)\(5\)](#)].
18. See Section D, Guest Speakers [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
19. See Section D, Guest Speakers [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
20. See the [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#).
21. See National Voter Registration Act of 1993, [Pub.L. 103-31](#) (May 20, 1993). See [52 U.S.C. 20501\(a\)](#).
22. See [52 U.S.C. 20507\(a\)\(5\)](#).
23. Non-governmental organizations must be qualified and approved according to the criteria in Subsection 3, Registration by Non-governmental Organizations [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(F\)\(3\)](#)].
24. See [52 U.S.C. 20506](#).
25. If a field office is unable to distribute voter registration forms in any of the above three manners, field leadership must notify their chain of command within the Field Operations Directorate.
26. USCIS may approve the request on a one-time or standing basis, but USCIS may remove the organization at any time if the organization does not meet the participation requirements.
27. See [18 U.S.C. 241](#) and [18 U.S.C. 242](#). See [52 U.S.C. 20506\(a\)\(5\)](#) and [52 U.S.C. 20511](#).
28. Political activity includes activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group. For this purpose, political activity also includes advocacy

for particular referenda or other political propositions. For example, a non-governmental group participating in voter registration activities at an administrative naturalization ceremony may not provide information for or against a state immigration law or proposition. The organization's activities while participating must also comply with the Hatch Act, [5 U.S.C. 7321-26](#). See [52 U.S.C. 20506\(a\)\(5\)\(B\)](#).

29. See [52 U.S.C. 10101](#), [52 U.S.C. 10301](#), and [52 U.S.C. 10303\(f\)\(2\)](#).
30. Strict civil or criminal penalties may be imposed for the unauthorized purchase and use of voter registration information.
31. See [52 U.S.C. 20702](#) (regarding the theft, destruction, concealment, mutilation, or alteration of voter records).
32. The conclusion of the ceremony is after the Master of Ceremonies (USCIS official) has dismissed the new citizens.
33. For example, volunteers must not perform any of the USCIS employee's duties within the ceremony check-in process.
34. This includes any type of indoor or outdoor facility.
35. Such as by representing applicants or petitioners before USCIS or by contracting with USCIS.
36. USCIS provides Form G-1194 to the donor.
37. See DHS Form 112-02-001. USCIS Office of Chief Counsel's Ethics Division and the USCIS Director must both sign the form.
38. See [5 U.S.C. 7321-7326](#).
39. See Chapter 6, Judicial and Expedited Oath Ceremonies [[12 USCIS-PM J.6](#)] for information on non-administrative ceremonies.

40. External organizations may support USCIS naturalization ceremonies in one or more of the following ways: participating in the event agenda as determined by USCIS; promoting the event within the community; and offering to donate a neutral space in which to hold the naturalization ceremony. See Section I, Offers to Donate Use of Facilities [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
41. See Section I, Offers to Donate Use of Facilities [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
42. The seal and signature of external organizations may only be used in accordance with [DHS Management Directive 123-06: Use of the Department of Homeland Security Seal](#). Local offices should consult with the USCIS Office of the Chief Counsel's Ethics Division for guidance.
43. See Section D, Guest Speakers [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(D\)](#)].
44. See Section F, Voter Registration Services [[12 USCIS-PM J.5\(F\)](#)].

Chapter 6 - Judicial and Expedited Oath Ceremonies

A. Judicial Oath Ceremony

An applicant may elect to have his or her Oath of Allegiance administered by the court or the court may have exclusive authority to administer the oath.¹¹¹ In these instances, USCIS must notify the clerk of court, in writing, that the Secretary of Homeland Security has determined that the applicant is eligible to naturalize.

After administering the Oath of Allegiance, the clerk of court must issue each person who appeared for the ceremony a document indicating the court administered the oath. In addition, the clerk must issue a document indicating that the court changed the applicant's name (if applicable).

B. Expedited Oath Ceremony

An applicant may request, with sufficient cause, that either USCIS or the court grant an expedited oath ceremony.¹²¹ In determining whether to grant an expedited oath ceremony, the court or the USCIS District Director may consider special circumstances of a compelling or humanitarian nature. Special circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- A serious illness of the applicant or a member of the applicant's family;

- A permanent disability of the applicant sufficiently incapacitating as to prevent the applicant's personal appearance at a scheduled ceremony;
- The developmental disability or advanced age of the applicant which would make appearance at a scheduled ceremony improper; or
- An urgent or compelling circumstances relating to travel or employment determined by the court or USCIS to be sufficiently meritorious to warrant special consideration. [\[3\]](#)

USCIS may seek verification of the validity of the information provided in the request. If the applicant is waiting for a court ceremony, USCIS must promptly provide the court with a copy of the request without reaching a decision on whether to grant or deny the request.

Courts exercising exclusive authority may either hold an expedited oath ceremony or, if an expedited judicial oath ceremony is impractical, refer the applicant to USCIS. In addition, the court must inform the District Director, in writing, of the court's decision to grant the applicant an expedited oath ceremony and that the court has relinquished exclusive jurisdiction as to that applicant.

Footnotes

1. See [INA 310\(b\)](#).
2. See [INA 337\(c\)](#). See [8 CFR 337.3\(a\)](#).
3. See [8 CFR 337.3\(c\)](#).

Appendices

Updates

Technical Update – Authorized Medical Professionals

September 26, 2018

This technical update provides clarification on the medical professionals (medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, and clinical psychologists) authorized to complete a written evaluation of medical condition in connection with an oath waiver request.

Technical Update – Authority to Administer the Oath of Allegiance

March 21, 2018

This technical update clarifies that the Secretary of Homeland Security has, through the Director of USCIS, delegated the authority to administer the Oath during an administrative naturalization ceremony to certain USCIS officials who can successively re-delegate the authority within their chains of command.

POLICY ALERT – Administrative Naturalization Ceremonies

June 28, 2017

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is updating policy guidance on USCIS administrative naturalization ceremonies, to include guidance regarding participation from other U.S. government and non-governmental entities.

POLICY ALERT – Modifications to Oath of Allegiance for Naturalization

July 21, 2015

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is issuing policy guidance to clarify the eligibility requirements for modifications to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance for naturalization.

POLICY ALERT – Comprehensive Citizenship and Naturalization Policy Guidance

January 07, 2013

USCIS is issuing updated and comprehensive citizenship and naturalization policy guidance in the new USCIS Policy Manual.