



**U.S. Citizenship and
Immigration Services**

USCIS Policy Manual

Current as of March 19, 2020

Volume 12 - Citizenship and Naturalization

Part J - Oath of Allegiance

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	<p>Deletion of either or both of the following clauses:</p> <p>Bearing arms on behalf of the United States if required by law [INA 337(a)(5)(A)]; and</p> <p>Performing noncombatant service in the U.S. armed forces when required by law [INA 337(a)(5)(B)]</p>	<p>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.</p>
Affirmation of Allegiance in Lieu of Oath	<p>Substitution of the words “solemnly affirm” for the words “on oath” and no recitation of the words “so help me God” [8 CFR 337.1(b)]</p>	<p>Not Required</p>
Waiver of the Oath	<p>Requirement to take the Oath of Allegiance may be waived</p>	<p>Evaluation by medical professional stating inability to understand (or communicate) the meaning of the oath due to a medical condition</p>

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

- 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.^[7]

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.^[8] 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.^[9] 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.”^[10]

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.

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\(b\)](#).

Legal Authorities

[INA 332](#), [8 CFR 332](#) - Naturalization administration, executive functions

[INA 337](#), [8 CFR 337](#) - Oath of renunciation and allegiance

[INA 341, 8 CFR 341](#) - Certificates of citizenship

Forms

[G-28, Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative](#)

Appendices

No appendices available at this time.

Technical Update - Replacing the Term “Foreign National”

October 08, 2019

This technical update replaces all instances of the term “foreign national” with “alien” throughout the Policy Manual as used to refer to a person who meets the definition provided in INA 101(a)(3) [“any person not a citizen or national of the United States”].

[Read More](#)

AFFECTED SECTIONS

[1 USCIS-PM - Volume 1 - General Policies and Procedures](#)

[2 USCIS-PM - Volume 2 - Nonimmigrants](#)

[6 USCIS-PM - Volume 6 - Immigrants](#)

[7 USCIS-PM - Volume 7 - Adjustment of Status](#)

[8 USCIS-PM - Volume 8 - Admissibility](#)

[9 USCIS-PM - Volume 9 - Waivers](#)

[10 USCIS-PM - Volume 10 - Employment Authorization](#)

[11 USCIS-PM - Volume 11 - Travel and Identity Documents](#)

[12 USCIS-PM - Volume 12 - Citizenship and Naturalization](#)

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.

[Read More](#)

AFFECTED SECTIONS

12 USCIS-PM J.3 - Chapter 3 - Oath of Allegiance Modifications and Waivers

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.

[Read More](#)

AFFECTED SECTIONS

12 USCIS-PM - Volume 12 - Citizenship and Naturalization

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