



September 2005

Fact Sheet

CITIZENSHIP DAY

Citizenship Day and Constitution Week is a time for reflection on the rights and responsibilities guaranteed to every citizen by the supreme law of our land, our Constitution. The choice of the week of September 17 for this observance commemorates the events of September 17, 1787 when the United States Constitution was signed by delegates from 12 states at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Citizenship Day itself has its roots in President Woodrow Wilson's efforts, back in 1915, where as part of what he called National Americanization Day, the President himself, cabinet members, Administration officials as well as prominent public figures such as Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, gave speeches at naturalization ceremonies throughout the nation.

Later in 1952, President Harry Truman signed a bill formalizing the celebration of Citizenship Day on September 17. This year, President Bush signed a proclamation declaring September 17th as Citizenship Day and the start of Constitution Week. The proclamation calls on all United States citizens to rededicate themselves to their country and the principles upon which it was founded.

In a similar manner, President Bush has stated: "America has never been united by blood or birth or soil, we are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles, every citizen must uphold them and every immigrant by embracing these ideals makes our country more, not less, American."

Celebrating a Nation of Immigrants

Citizenship, whether by birth or naturalization, is the cornerstone of this nation's values and ideals. Each year, hundreds of thousands of immigrants complete the naturalization process and take part in naturalization ceremonies across the country. These [naturalization ceremonies](#) may be conducted by a Federal Court or by a local U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office, and may involve a handful of people at a local court house or several thousand at a sports arena. Regardless of a ceremony's size or venue, the applicants for naturalization share a common experience as they take the Oath of Allegiance, declaring their fidelity and allegiance to the United States, its Constitution and laws. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will celebrate Citizenship Day by holding special naturalizations ceremonies across the United States.

U.S. citizenship represents a commitment to the shared civic values that unite all Americans. In recognition of this, Congress created the USCIS Office of Citizenship in 2002. The office is charged with promoting

instruction and training about citizenship rights and responsibilities and the development of educational materials for immigrants interested in becoming citizens. In supporting and promoting civic education for our immigrants, the [Office of Citizenship](#) provides new immigrants and future Americans with the foundation needed to embrace the common civic values that continue to make the United States a nation united in diversity.

Citizenship Statistics

2001-2004: More than two million individuals have been naturalized during the new millennium. From October 2004 to August 2005 more than 475,000 individuals became United States citizens.

1991-2000: This period witnessed the largest number of naturalizations any decade in our nation's history, approximately 5.6 million individuals. In 1996, naturalizations peaked at more than one million, for a total of 1,044,689. The late 1990s also marked another shift in naturalization demographics, with Mexico yielding the most naturalized citizens, followed by Vietnam and the Philippines.

1981-1990: Almost 2.3 million people were naturalized during the 1980s. Nearly half that number hailed from Asia. Together, Canada and Mexico accounted for more than one quarter of the remaining new citizens.

1971-1980: The United States welcomed almost 1.5 million new citizens during the 1970s. The Philippines, Cuba and China were the leading countries of origin. This trend represented a shift from the 1960s, when the largest number of new citizens came from Europe. Some 66,000 members of the U.S. military were naturalized during this decade.

– USCIS –

On March 1, 2003, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services became one of three legacy INS components to join the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. USCIS is charged with fundamentally transforming and improving the delivery of immigration and citizenship services, while enhancing our nation's security.