



CIS FACT SHEET

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 17, 2003

Contact: CIS OPA
202-514-2648

Citizenship Day

Citizenship Day is celebrated on September 17th, the day the U.S. Constitution was signed in 1787. Citizenship Day provides an opportunity to honor those people who have become U.S. citizens. In addition, it is an important reminder of the rights and responsibilities associated with U.S. citizenship.

Citizenship Day has been celebrated in some form since 1940, when Congress designated the third Sunday in May as "I Am an American Day." In 1952, President Harry Truman signed a bill formalizing the celebration of Citizenship Day on September 17th. The week beginning September 17th is Constitution Week, when we reflect on the enduring importance of this great document.

Each year the President signs a proclamation declaring September 17th as Citizenship Day and the start of Constitution Week and calling upon all U.S. citizens, by birth or naturalization, to rededicate themselves to their country and the principles upon which it was founded.

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 application process and take part in naturalization ceremonies across the country. These naturalization ceremonies may be conducted by a Federal court or by a local Citizenship and Immigration Services office, and may involve a handful of people at a local courthouse 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.

Citizenship Statistics

2001-2003: Approximately 1.4 million individuals have been naturalized during the new millennium. From October 2002 to April 2003, 247,700 individuals became U.S. citizens.

1991-2000: This period witnessed the largest number of naturalizations of 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 U.S. welcomed approximately 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.

OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP

Mission

The CIS Office of Citizenship was created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The legislated mandate for this Office is to promote instruction and training on citizenship responsibilities for immigrants interested in becoming citizens, including the development of educational materials. In carrying out this mission, the Office will promote initiatives and activities to:

- Revive and emphasize the common civic identity and shared values that are essential to citizenship
- Raise awareness about the benefits and responsibilities associated with U.S. citizenship
- Enhance educational opportunities in English, Civics, and History for legal immigrants of all ages to assist their integration

Primary Roles and Responsibilities

The Office has two components, **program development** and **outreach**, and includes both Headquarters and field locations.

Program Development will focus on developing mission-related initiatives, which will be executed in collaboration with internal and external partners. Specifically, Program Development will:

- Partner with other agencies and entities to design educational materials and programs focusing on History, Civics, and English
- Develop resources and enhance overall educational opportunities to support legal immigrants' integration into American civic culture
- Identify opportunities to enhance the meaning and stature of CIS citizenship-related ceremonies and events
- Provide input regarding CIS citizenship and naturalization policies

Outreach will focus on creating mechanisms to support mission-related program delivery and community outreach in a variety of ways. Specifically, Outreach will:

- Promote national and local dialogue about a common civic identity by coordinating forums, community meetings, and other special events

- Partner with information delivery sources reaching immigrant communities to promote programs and initiatives related to citizenship and immigration services
- Engage a strong network of key stakeholders, including federal, state, and local agencies as well as community-based and civic education organizations in promoting programs and initiatives related to citizenship and immigration services, soliciting feedback from immigrant communities, and identifying appropriate delivery channels

For more information, please visit

www.immigration.gov/graphics/citizenship/index.htm

-USCIS-

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