



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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Prepared Remarks
Naturalization Ceremony

George Bush Presidential Library
March 11, 2005

May it please the court.

President Bush, Mrs. Bush, Good morning. It is good to be back in Texas and in Aggie Land. Thank you for personally hosting today's ceremony here; at your magnificent Presidential Library. Judge Rosenthal, thank you for your very warm remarks and for presiding over today's ceremony. My wife Tere and I hold you and Gary in high esteem.

Family ... Friends ... Distinguished Guests ... and – most importantly – New Citizens.

It's a great day to be an American!

It's an even better day to become one!

When **THIS** President Bush was in office, he signed the Immigration Act of 1990; and he said then, "Immigration is not just a link to America's past; it's a bridge to America's future." Those words have rung true for more than 228 years. Since the founding of our republic, immigration has played a vital role in shaping our great land. Looking over our gathering of new citizens, I can say without hesitation that America's future is indeed bright.

People are often surprised when I tell them that in the USA we have about 45,000 non-US-citizens serving in **OUR** military. Aside from naturalizing thousands stateside, last year USCIS began to bring naturalization ceremonies to our military serving overseas. To launch this initiative, I lead a team into the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq. There we saw first-hand, the hard work of our soldiers, marines, sailors, coastguardsmen and airmen, in fighting the war against terrorism.

The troops I saw there, demonstrated – daily – the flexibility to transition, from a mighty liberating force, to aiding the Afghan and Iraqi people in re-claiming their countries from tyranny. For one glorious week, we were among thousands of every day heroes – like you – as they stoically carried out their **duty** with **honor**.

You – and your families – demonstrate with your service, remarkable self-sacrifice for your adopted country. Even before you had secured for yourself the rights associated with American citizenship, you chose to defend our country, and answered a call for a cause greater than self.

I salute with reverence, you and all of those in uniform, who are willing to give the ultimate sacrifice to preserve freedom.

Each of you has a unique and compelling story. I only wish time would allow me to speak about the self-sacrifices that you and your families have individually made, in defense of freedom and in service to your fellow Americans. But, I will highlight one of your stories; the story of Sergeant Rosa Weston.

Born in Mexico, Sergeant Weston is a fine example of self-sacrifice. She just recently returned from a tour of service in Iraq. She returned to her two sons Alex, age twelve, and Edward, age nine. This single mom of two young boys did her duty and went overseas into harm's way. And of course, the families also serve. Alex and Edward, thank you for the sacrifice you made allowing your Mom to do her part in defense of our freedom. And thanks for agreeing to lead us in the "Pledge of Allegiance" later this morning.

To Sergeant Weston, and to each of you, on behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for your service.

As new citizens, from today on, you will be able to fully pursue your version of the American Dream ... relish in your success, as you have truly earned it.

Like you, my wife and I are naturalized citizens – coming as 15-year old refugees from Cuba, without our families, 43 years ago. Some may find it remarkable that, as an immigrant, I would be in charge of the United States immigration services. Instead of remarkable, I think it simply underscores the fact that naturalized citizens in the United States fulfill important and critical roles. You see, we have no second-class U.S. citizens! Native born or naturalized, as Americans, we shoulder the same rights and responsibilities. So as President Bush will soon tell you, as citizens of this great country, the sky is the limit to what you can achieve.

Before introducing the 41st President of the United States, I'll let you into a little personal secret. Two years ago, President George W. Bush, asked me to take this job and lead 15,000 employees in reforming our tired system of immigration services. I have to admit, I hesitated in my response. Before me was a daunting task. I did not want to fail ... and let my President down. As I struggled over my decision, I thought of my "personal hero" Bush # 41. Over the 28 years that I've known him, and his family, I've come to learn that he never has shied away from serving his country – always true to duty, honor, and country.

- Here is the man who was one of the youngest commissioned pilot in the U.S. Navy. During service in World War II, he was shot down in 1944 over Chichi, Jima – a Japanese held island in the South Pacific. He was later picked up by a U.S. submarine – the U.S.S. Finback.
- Here is the man who was elected to the United States Congress in 1966 from the District that included my hometown of Houston. Re-elected in 1968 to a second term, he represented the people of both Houston and Texas in Congress through 1970.
- Here is the man who took the thankless job, as Chairman of the Republican Party – before being Republican was cool.
- Here is the man who became Ambassador to the United Nations, and later the first Special Envoy to China, when few would have accepted those challenges.
- Here is the man who took over the CIA when the Nation was in turmoil, and that critical Agency needed to repair its reputation.

- Here is the man who answered the call to be Vice President of the United States.
- Here is the man who as President of the United States guided the free world through the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the upheaval in China, the liberation of Kuwait, Desert Storm, established a 1,000 points of light, and much more!

With that background guiding my decision, in short order, I did what any of you would have done. I said – **Yes Mr. President! Thank you Mr. President!**

And in answering President Bush’s call to serve, I have enjoyed the most gratifying, very best years of my professional life. In fact, at USCIS we’ve achieved progress that few thought possible.

Perhaps the words you are about to hear will **inspire you**, the way this great man **inspires me** . . . To achieve beyond your own expectations . . . To reach your personal best.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my high honor to introduce the 41st President of the United States, George Bush. Mr. President...