



The naturalization oath of allegiance ceremony

Overview

After the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization interview, the final step in the naturalization process is the oath of allegiance ceremony. You are not a U.S. citizen until you attend the ceremony and take the oath of allegiance.

Once you pass the naturalization interview, you need to remain eligible for citizenship until your oath ceremony. If you do anything that causes you to lose your eligibility, you cannot take the oath. You may have to wait to regain eligibility, or you may never be able to naturalize.

At the ceremony, you will complete a questionnaire about your activities since your interview. The questionnaire is on the back of Form N-445, *Notice of Naturalization Oath Ceremony* (your appointment notice). The questions are very similar to the ones in the naturalization application.

If you answer “yes” to any question, a USCIS officer will ask additional questions to determine if there is an eligibility problem. You cannot take the oath until the problem is resolved.

If there is a problem that cannot be immediately resolved, your name will be removed from the oath ceremony list. USCIS will notify you in writing of the specific problem. You will have 15 days to respond. If USCIS decides that you are still eligible after reviewing your response, you will be rescheduled for the oath.

Depending on where you live, the oath ceremony will either be administrative (conducted by USCIS officials) or judicial (conducted by a federal judge). If you are changing your name, your oath ceremony must be conducted by a judge. Some USCIS offices offer “same day” administrative oath ceremonies, where you can take the oath on the same day as your naturalization interview.

The ceremony will typically consist of a presentation on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, taking the oath, a congratulations speech and distribution of naturalization certificates.

After the ceremony, you can register to vote, apply for a U.S. passport and file permanent resident petitions for family members. If you filed a petition for a family member when you were a Lawful Permanent Resident, you should update the appropriate government entity (USCIS or the National Visa Center) with your

new status. Usually (with a few exceptions), your naturalization will allow you to upgrade the petition for faster processing. If you changed your name when you naturalized, be sure to change your name on your driver's license, bank accounts, employment records and other important documents. In addition, it is important to update your citizenship status with the Social Security Administration.

Tips for the Oath Ceremony

- Wear clothes that are appropriate for an important event. (USCIS requests no jeans, shorts or flip flops.)
- Be sure to bring the documents listed on the appointment notice to the ceremony, including your permanent resident card, any re-entry permit or refugee travel document you may have and any other immigration documents issued by USCIS.
- Bring family and friends if you wish. If space is limited, the appointment notice will tell you how many guests you can bring.
- Plan to arrive early. Usually you will be asked to arrive at least 30 minutes before the ceremony begins in order to check in and complete all the necessary paperwork.
- Plan to allow time after the ceremony for things like checking your certificate for any errors, registering to vote or applying for a passport.
- Keep your certificate in a safe place at home or use a safety deposit box in a bank. Do not fold your certificate. Only carry it when you need it. Do not photocopy it unless required for a USCIS application.

Problems

What if I don't receive my appointment notice in the mail?

The waiting time between the interview and oath ceremony is usually no more than 30 days. Find out how long people in your USCIS district normally wait for the oath ceremony notice. Contact USCIS if you have waited longer than normal for your district.

What if I cannot attend the ceremony on the scheduled date?

You should make every possible effort to attend the ceremony as scheduled. If you cannot attend, you must write a letter to USCIS explaining why. Return your appointment notice with the letter by certified mail with a return receipt. You will be re-scheduled for an oath ceremony at a later date. If you fail to attend two oath ceremonies without explanation, USCIS will deny your application and you will have to begin the application process all over again.

What if I cannot attend the oath ceremony due to a disability?

If a disability prevents you from attending the oath ceremony, you can request to take the oath at your home or another location as a reasonable accommodation. You can find information about how to request a reasonable accommodation here: www.uscis.gov/tools/requesting-accommodations-disabilities.

What if I need to expedite my oath ceremony?

Your oath ceremony may be expedited in an emergency or for humanitarian reasons, such as a serious illness of the applicant or a member of the applicant's family. Submit a request in writing to the District Director of your local USCIS office (for an administrative ceremony) or the court (for a judicial ceremony). Include evidence of your need for an expedited oath, if available. USCIS' criteria for expediting cases are found here: www.uscis.gov/forms/expedite-criteria.

What if I forget my permanent resident card?

You must turn in your card in order to attend the oath ceremony and receive your naturalization certificate. If you have lost your card, USCIS may not give you your naturalization certificate until you fill out an affidavit or sworn statement in front of a USCIS officer saying that you lost the card.

What if I arrive late?

You may not be able to take the oath. USCIS may reschedule you for a later date. If you miss the ceremony two times without an explanation, USCIS will take steps to deny your application.

What if my naturalization certificate has an error?

Show it to the USCIS officer at the ceremony. It is easier to take care of the problem at the ceremony than to wait until later. USCIS may be able to correct the error right away, or you may have to submit Form N-565, Application for Replacement Naturalization/Citizenship Document. If the error was made by USCIS, there is no fee for the N-565.

What if my naturalization certificate is lost, stolen, or damaged?

You need to file Form N-565 to request a new certificate. If the certificate is damaged, you must return it to USCIS with the N-565 application.

What if I legally change my name after naturalization?

You can file Form N-565 to request a naturalization certificate in your new name.

Can the government take away my citizenship?

Yes, the government may seek to denaturalize you if USCIS determines that you were not eligible to be naturalized due to a criminal history or other serious issues. This can happen if you lie about your eligibility

on the naturalization application, at the interview or at the oath ceremony. However, denaturalization is rare.

What is expatriation?

Expatriation is the act of voluntarily giving up one's citizenship. Both naturalized citizens and citizens by birth can choose to give up their U.S. citizenship through expatriation. You must show that you intend to give up your citizenship and that you do so voluntarily. There must be evidence in both your words and your actions. Some examples of expatriating acts are joining the armed forces of a country at war with the U.S. or being convicted of treason against the U.S.

How do I get more information?

For more resources about citizenship, visit our Citizenship Toolkit at [cliniclegal.org/citizenship](https://www.cliniclegal.org/citizenship).

The Oath of Allegiance

"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."