

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

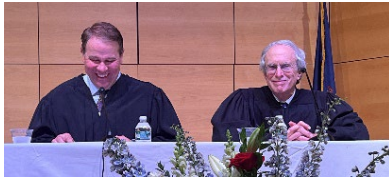


DISTRICT OF MAINE

**NATURALIZATION CEREMONY CELEBRATED**

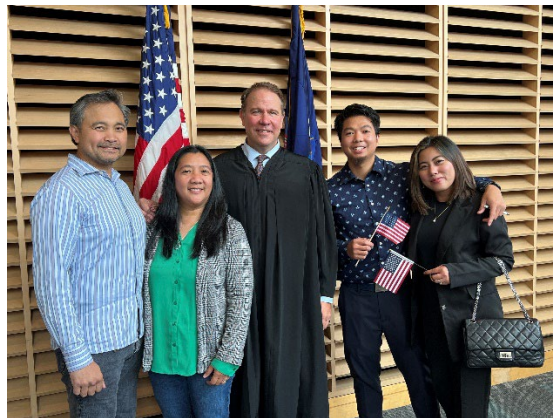
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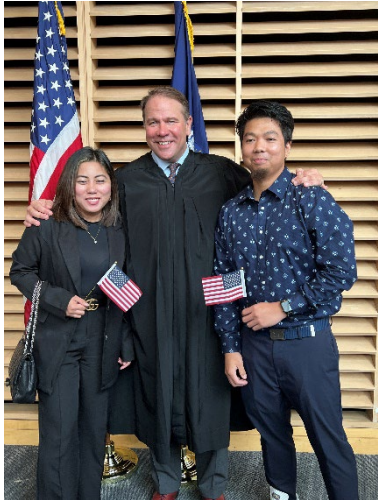
SEPTEMBER 15, 2023



On September 15, 2023, the United States District Court for the District of Maine commemorated Constitution and Citizenship Day with a special naturalization ceremony. The Hon. Lance Walker, U.S. District Judge, and the Hon. Kermit V. Lipez, U.S. Circuit Judge presided over the ceremony and granted citizenship to eighty-three new American citizens from countries throughout the world.

This ceremony was enriched with participation by the Portland Maine Fire Department Color Guard, students from Holy Cross School, and the Portland Public High Schools Orchestra lead by Julianne Eberl. Also in attendance was Darcie N. McElwee, U.S. Attorney for the District of Maine, representatives for Senators Susan M. Collins and Angus King; U.S. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree; and representatives from the Maine Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames of America in the State of Maine, and League of Women Voters of the Greater Portland Area.





The new American citizens came from countries throughout the world including: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Germany, Haiti, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, Somalia, South Korea, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom and Vietnam.

Attached are the remarks made by U.S. District Judge Lance E. Walker during the ceremony.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MAINE

NATURALIZATION CEREMONY  
&  
CONSTITUTION DAY CELEBRATION

EXCERPT OF JUDGE LANCE WALKER'S REMARKS

University of Southern Maine  
Abromson Center - Hannaford Hall  
88 Bedford Street  
Portland, Maine 04101

1 \* \* \* \* \*

2 THE COURT: Indeed. Welcome. It is of interest to  
3 note that we have 83 new citizens from 44 countries here this  
4 morning, so I'm going to take a deep breath and try to do this  
5 in one take. Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Belarus,  
6 Belgium, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia,  
7 Canada, Central African Republic, China, Columbia, Congo,  
8 Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Eritrea,  
9 Germany, Haiti, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico,  
10 Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Rwanda.

11 Do we have a shout out for the Philippines?

12 (Applause)

13 THE COURT: Rwanda, Serbia, Somalia, South Korea,  
14 Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United  
15 Kingdom, and Vietnam.

16 (Applause)

17 THE COURT: Today I have the high honor and personal  
18 privilege of being the first to welcome you as newly admitted  
19 citizens to the United States. This is a momentous event not  
20 only for you but for generations of your family to come, so  
21 cherish this moment. Savor this moment. But perhaps most  
22 importantly, and as Judge Lipez has indicated, go home today  
23 and record this moment so that future generations can learn the  
24 story of their American citizenship.

25 Before we leave today, take a moment and look at each

1 other. You individually and as a group are now America.  
2 Welcome to your new citizenship.

3 (Applause)

4 THE COURT: Today's ceremony is an expression of our  
5 country's most fundamental promise, to secure a more perfect  
6 union. This lofty aspiration is made much more real by your  
7 presence here today. You remind us of the value of our own  
8 citizenship. The history of the United States is a history of  
9 immigration.

10 The United States is a land of fresh starts. Our country  
11 was not founded upon racial, ethnic, religious, or political  
12 identities. It was not founded on hereditary privilege or  
13 affiliation with favored family names.

14 Our first principle of American democracy was an idea  
15 expressed by Thomas Jefferson on July 4, 1776, when he said, we  
16 hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created  
17 equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain  
18 unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the  
19 pursuit of happiness.

20 And this is important for you to keep in mind, the  
21 Constitution is our civic compass. It creates the conditions  
22 of liberty, and liberty is a condition of happiness. But as  
23 Benjamin Franklin put it, the Constitution doesn't guarantee  
24 happiness, it only guarantees the pursuit of it. You have to  
25 catch up with happiness yourself.

1           The philosopher Aristotle says virtue can only manifest  
2           itself in action. Maybe we could borrow from Aristotle when  
3           understanding our duties as American citizens. Our founding  
4           ideals are noble and true, but it is only by our action that  
5           they have any meaning, any virtue.

6           Citizenship is an action word. When you take action,  
7           remember that America's advantage is the diversity of our  
8           people. So please share your art, share your music, share your  
9           language, and especially for me at any rate share your recipes  
10          with your fellow Americans.

11          Again I don't know why everyone is laughing.

12          On a hot summer day in Philadelphia many, many years ago  
13          Benjamin Franklin was leaving the Constitutional Convention at  
14          Independence Hall when he was approached by a group of  
15          citizens. A woman in the group demanded, what kind of  
16          government did you give us, a republic or a monarchy? Franklin  
17          replied, a republic, madame, if you can keep it.

18          Franklin knew, and you should know, that America's success  
19          was not inevitable and nothing about its continued success is  
20          inevitable as we sit here today. Freedom, as history teaches  
21          us, is not the natural state between governments and the  
22          people.

23          A great many of your fellow citizens have suffered,  
24          fought, and died in the struggle to bring life to the promises  
25          of our founding covenant. If we are to continue to enjoy the

1 blessings of liberty, we must take our citizenship seriously.

2       So let me offer you three words to remind you how best to  
3 do that: Grit, gratitude, grace.

4       Have grit. By grit I mean personal fortitude.

5 Disagreement is essential to the function of the republic but  
6 being disagreeable is not. Nevertheless you may encounter  
7 those who mean to make you feel badly or to make you feel  
8 excluded. Ignore them and press forward. I promise you there  
9 is nothing as satisfying as living a life of purpose in spite  
10 of those who mean to discourage you.

11       President Teddy Roosevelt captured this idea in his "Man  
12 In The Arena" passage. I look at his advice every day, it  
13 hangs on the wall in my chambers. I recommend it to you as a  
14 call to action. It is presidential permission for you to fail  
15 in your endeavors but a mandate for you to do so while daring  
16 and trying. Roosevelt tells us it is not the critic who  
17 counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles,  
18 or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The  
19 credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose  
20 face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; and who strives  
21 valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because  
22 there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does  
23 actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms,  
24 the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who  
25 at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement,

1 and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring  
2 greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and  
3 timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

4 Gratitude. Reflect every now and then, like we do today,  
5 about our unimaginable good fortune. The Constitution is the  
6 most ambitious and enduring document devised in human history  
7 to maximize the power of free people to live in service of  
8 noble ideals. Be grateful for that gift.

9 And grace. Sadly, too much of our discourse with each  
10 other is unkind and intemperate. Resist the popular temptation  
11 of being snarky. The younger folks in the hall always know  
12 exactly what that means. It has become the principal vocation  
13 and pastime of far too many. To be good people and therefore  
14 good citizens we need to pull back from this narcissistic  
15 abyss.

16 Judge Learned Hand wisely observed that the spirit of  
17 liberty is the spirit which is not too sure it is right. So I  
18 encourage you to engage your neighbors and leaders with  
19 humility. And remember, while you may disagree with some of  
20 your fellow citizens, they are not your enemies. Abide the  
21 truth that we are all in this together if we are to be in it at  
22 all. By the same token, dare to be unfashionable and think for  
23 yourself, but do so with grace.

24 As a candidate for the American presidency said many years  
25 ago, patriotism is not the short frenzied outbursts of emotion



1 but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.

2 So the duty of a lifetime falls to you now, our newest  
3 citizens. Be well informed, start a business, continue your  
4 education, practice your religion, love your neighbor. It  
5 makes no difference what brought you here. In the United  
6 States it does not matter who you were, it matters who you are.  
7 So take your place in American history as stewards of the  
8 American promise.

9 On behalf of this country, I welcome you, I congratulate  
10 you, and I wish for each of you the blessings of liberty.

11 Congratulations.

12 (Applause)

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