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District Court Resumes Naturalization Ceremonies

Chicago, Ill. - On December 28, 2020, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois resumed naturalization ceremonies at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse with COVID-19 safety measures in place.

“It brings our court great joy to now be able to safely resume one of our most uplifting and significant duties, administering the Oath of Allegiance to new U.S. citizens. Seeing members of our community reach their goal of U.S. citizenship during these unprecedented times brings inspiration and hope to us all,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

Beginning in mid-March 2020, the court suspended large public events, including naturalization ceremonies, in compliance with federal, state, and local health guidelines on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starting in August 2020 through the fall, the court hosted outdoor naturalization ceremonies for 30 candidates at a time in the Quincy Courtyard adjacent to the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse.

Currently, the court is hosting two ceremonies per day, five days a week.

Naturalization ceremonies are now limited to 25 candidates per ceremony to allow for social distancing throughout the courtroom. Masks or face coverings are required at Dirksen U.S. Courthouse. Additional safety protocols are already in place at courthouse, including sanitizing stations, social distance reminders, limits on elevator capacity, and reconfigured exits and entrances.

The district’s judges preside over naturalization ceremonies, in which new citizens take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States, a sworn declaration that every citizenship applicant

must recite during a formal ceremony in order to become a naturalized American citizen. When taking the Oath, the new citizen promises to support and defend the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the U.S. Prior to the pandemic, the court conducted naturalization ceremonies inside a courtroom with approximately 100 candidates in each ceremony.

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Above: Judge Thomas M. Durkin administers the Oath to new citizens on December 28, 2020.