

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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484 New American Citizens Take Oath at Northwestern's Welsh-Ryan Arena

Evanston, Ill. – Today at the Welsh-Ryan Arena on the campus of Northwestern University, 484 individuals from 76 countries were sworn in as U.S. citizens. In a first-of-its-kind naturalization ceremony, Northwestern University hosted the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the new citizens, and their families.

“In this moment, when the eyes of the world are turned to an international conflict, we Americans open our arms and hearts to new citizens with a warm welcome and with hope for a world where all people enjoy freedom and safety,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

Judge Pallmeyer; Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky; Dr. Derrick Gragg, Combe Family Vice President for Athletics and Recreation, Northwestern University; and USCIS Chicago Field Office Director, Kevin Riddle, all welcomed the new citizens. U.S. Magistrate Judge Sunil R. Harjani administered the Oath of Allegiance.

Every year thousands of immigrants visit the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois to be sworn in as U.S. citizens at naturalization ceremonies. The district's judges preside over these ceremonies, which take place in both of the district's courthouses and throughout the district. Family and friends gather to watch as 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.

Today's ceremony was the largest ceremony ever administered by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court has conducted naturalization ceremonies outdoors, in large public spaces that allow for distancing, and has had to limit the number of citizens at each courthouse ceremony to allow for social distancing and to comply with health guidelines.

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Above: Kathryn Kelly, Assistant U.S. Attorney; USCIS Chicago Field Office Director, Kevin Riddle; Clerk of Court, Thomas G. Bruton; U.S. Magistrate Judge Sunil R. Harjani; Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer; Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky; Dr. Derrick Gragg, Combe Family Vice President for Athletics and Recreation, Northwestern University.

Photos by James Slonoff.