

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF WYOMING

In the Matter of the
Naturalization and Granting of
United States Citizenship to:

Casper, Wyoming
April 8, 2024
3:26 p.m.

MAXIM ESLAO SALVA, CAROL LARA
BISSETT, KHAMSIENG VIRACHACK,
SONGPHONG PHANPHONG, MAJA
JECHOREK, CHA ATIENZA ORTIZ,
KATHERINE SOFIA CHIN DAVY EMRE
VATANSEVER, MARIA FERNANDA
BORUNDA, OKSANA SPENCER, AND
GEMMA STEWART,

Ewing T. Kerr
Federal Courthouse

Petitioners.

TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING ON PETITIONS FOR
UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND NATURALIZATION CEREMONY
BEFORE THE HONORABLE SCOTT W. SKAVDAHL
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

APPEARANCES:

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transcript produced with computer-aided transcription.*

1 (Proceedings commenced at 3:26 p.m., April 8, 2024.)

2 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

3 Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to
4 the Ewing T. Kerr Federal Courthouse. The Court will suspend
5 all local rules on cameras and recording devices, and you may
6 photograph and record as you wish.

7 I would note it is a tradition at the beginning of
8 these naturalization ceremonies to recognize those citizens
9 and families of those citizens who have paid the ultimate
10 price in defending what so many in this world seek: the
11 freedom and benefits of becoming a United States citizen.

12 As of this morning, 7,085 American men and women have
13 been killed in action while involved in military operations in
14 the Middle East. In addition, 53,533 United States military
15 personnel have been wounded in action during these military
16 operations.

17 Let us take a moment of silence and recognize these
18 American heroes and their families, whose sacrifices cannot be
19 measured and loss will never be recovered.

20 (Moment of silence.)

21 THE COURT: Thank you.

22 The United States District Court for the District of
23 Wyoming is in special session for the naturalization of
24 foreign nationals to be United States citizens. It is with
25 great honor, pride, and privilege that I am able to conduct

1 today's ceremony, naturalizing 11 new U.S. citizens from nine
2 different countries in the world.

3 The Federal District Court in Wyoming, including
4 Judges Johnson, Freudenthal, Rankin, and Hambrick, extend
5 their congratulations to you and your family and friends.

6 At this time I would ask Mr. Cort Patterson with
7 Homeland Security for U.S. Citizenship. If you could please
8 raise your hand as your name is called so that we can verify
9 we have everyone.

10 Mr. Patterson.

11 MR. PATTERSON: Yes, sir.

12 THE COURT: Welcome.

13 MR. PATTERSON: Thank you, sir. First we have Maxim
14 Eslao Salva. We have Carol Lara Bissett, Khamsieng Virachack,
15 Songphong Phanphong, Maja Jechorek, Cha Atienza Ortiz,
16 Katherine Sofia Chin Davy Emre Vatansever, Maria Fernanda
17 Borunda, Oksana Spencer, and Gemma Stewart.

18 All accounted for, sir.

19 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Patterson.

20 One of the most fundamental acts we do as citizens is
21 pledge our allegiance to the flag of the United States. I
22 would ask if Elizabeth Dutric (phonetic) could come forward
23 and lead us in that Pledge of Allegiance, and if you could
24 then remain standing for the playing of "The Star-Spangled
25 Banner."

1 And before -- let me make one change here.

2 I'm sorry, Elizabeth.

3 But if I could have the posting of the colors. That
4 way, we'll do it in order. I apologize.

5 (Posting of the colors.)

6 THE COURT: At this time, Elizabeth, if you could
7 lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

8 (Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.)

9 THE COURT: Thank you. And if you could remain for
10 "The Star-Spangled Banner."

11 (Playing "The Star-Spangled Banner.")

12 THE COURT: Thank you, Colonel.

13 Thank you. Please be seated. At this time I would
14 ask the Clerk of Court to play the President's video.

15 (Playing message from the President of the United States.)

16 THE COURT: At this time I would recognize
17 Mr. Kubichek on behalf of the United States Attorney -- or
18 Attorney General for a petition.

19 MR. KUBICHEK: Thank you, Your Honor. May it please
20 the Court.

21 THE COURT: Counsel.

22 MR. KUBICHEK: Before the Court today are individuals
23 for a hearing on their petitions for naturalization. Each of
24 these prospective citizens has successfully completed all of
25 the steps necessary for eligibility for United States

1 citizenship.

2 Moreover, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration
3 Service has completed its processes with respect to each of
4 them, including the necessary background investigations.
5 Having successfully negotiated all of those hurdles, we are
6 advised that each of them is well qualified to be admitted to
7 citizenship.

8 Therefore, Your Honor, the United States hereby moves
9 the Court to admit each of these individuals to United States
10 citizenship upon their taking of the required oath.

11 THE COURT: Thank you Mr. Kubichek.

12 On the petition of the United States, the Court would
13 find that each of the applicants identified has satisfied the
14 legal requirements to become citizens of the United States
15 and, therefore, will grant the petition and enter an order
16 allowing these petitioners to become citizens of the United
17 States of America subject to the taking of their oath.

18 I would, at this time, ask our newest United States
19 citizens if you could please stand and face me and raise your
20 right hand and repeat after me.

21 And those of you who wish to take pictures are free
22 to move around.

23 I, state your name --

24 THE PETITIONERS: I, (stating names) --

25 THE COURT: -- hereby declare, on oath --

1 THE PETITIONERS: -- hereby declare, on oath --

2 THE COURT: -- that I absolutely and entirely --

3 THE PETITIONERS: -- that I absolutely and

4 entirely --

5 THE COURT: -- renounce and abjure --

6 THE PETITIONERS: -- renounce and abjure --

7 THE COURT: -- all allegiance and fidelity --

8 THE PETITIONERS: -- all allegiance and fidelity --

9 THE COURT: -- to any foreign prince, potentate --

10 THE PETITIONERS: -- to any foreign prince,

11 potentate -- -

12 THE COURT: -- state, or sovereignty --

13 THE PETITIONERS: -- state, or sovereignty --

14 THE COURT: -- of whom or which --

15 THE PETITIONERS: -- of whom or which --

16 THE COURT: -- I have heretofore been --

17 THE PETITIONERS: -- I have heretofore been --

18 THE COURT: -- a subject or citizen.

19 THE PETITIONERS: -- a subject or citizen.

20 THE COURT: That I will support and defend --

21 THE PETITIONERS: That I will support and defend --

22 THE COURT: -- the Constitution and laws --

23 THE PETITIONERS: -- the Constitution and laws --

24 THE COURT: -- of the United States of America --

25 THE PETITIONERS: -- of the United States of

1 America --

2 THE COURT: -- against all enemies --

3 THE PETITIONERS: -- against all enemies --

4 THE COURT: -- foreign and domestic.

5 THE PETITIONERS: -- foreign and domestic.

6 THE COURT: That I will bear true faith --

7 THE PETITIONERS: That I will bear true faith --

8 THE COURT: -- and allegiance to the same.

9 THE PETITIONERS: -- and allegiance to the same.

10 THE COURT: That I will bear arms --

11 THE PETITIONERS: That I will bear arms --

12 THE COURT: -- on behalf of the United States --

13 THE PETITIONERS: -- on behalf of the United

14 States --

15 THE COURT: -- when required by law.

16 THE PETITIONERS: -- when required by law.

17 THE COURT: I take this obligation freely --

18 THE PETITIONERS: I take this obligation freely --

19 THE COURT: -- without any mental reservation --

20 THE PETITIONERS: -- without any mental

21 reservation --

22 THE COURT: -- or purpose of evasion.

23 THE PETITIONERS: -- or purpose of evasion.

24 THE COURT: So help me God.

25 THE PETITIONERS: So help me God.

1 THE COURT: Congratulations to our new citizens.

2 (Applause.)

3 THE COURT: At this time we'll present certificates
4 of citizenship to our newest citizens.

5 (Presentation of certificates.)

6 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

7 At this time I would -- before I forget, I would note
8 you've received -- in addition to your certificates that prove
9 your hard work and diligence, there are some letters that
10 you've received from the congressional delegation, I believe
11 from Senator Lummis and from Representative Hageman's office.
12 So you should have those with you.

13 Let me turn to the men and women who represent and
14 who are part of the reason why we enjoy the freedoms that we
15 have in this country that so many seek.

16 At this time I'd recognize the Daughters of the
17 American Revolution for presentation of various items to
18 recognize the newest U.S. citizens.

19 MS. TRUMBULL: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 Congratulations, my fellow Americans. My name is
21 Kristen Trumbull, and I'm here with the Fort Caspar Chapter,
22 Daughters of the American Revolution. We are a women service
23 organization focusing on historic preservation, education, and
24 patriotism.

25 I consider myself very lucky to have been born in the

1 United States. It's something that I take great pride in.
2 Each of you have had a unique journey arriving at this
3 celebration today, none of which were easy, I am sure.
4 Whether you came by boat, plane, or foot, you made the
5 necessary steps to become a citizen just like us today.

6 You have surpassed many difficult adjustments that
7 come with moving to a new country and fought hard to become an
8 American just like me and my DAR sisters. I commend you on
9 your hard work and dedication to achieve this status.

10 As an eighth-grade honors student back in the day, I
11 had to complete the 100 possible questions for the United
12 States citizenship test. Let's just say my score was
13 laughable.

14 As a communications scholar, I know that this road
15 has been filled with many obstacles such as language barriers,
16 new cultural norms, and everything else that comes with
17 immersing oneself in a new culture.

18 I would like to welcome you, on behalf of the Fort
19 Caspar Chapter, as our newest countrymen. We ask only that
20 you love America. Cherish her, honor her, protect her, and
21 embrace all the possibilities you are given.

22 May God bless each and every one of you on this
23 journey. Congratulations.

24 (Applause.)

25 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Trumbull.

1 I also believe we have some representatives from the
2 4H Club here today, and I believe that they brought some items
3 to welcome our newest U.S. citizens that are representative of
4 Wyoming.

5 4H REPRESENTATIVE: Hi. We are representing Natrona
6 County 4H. We're thrilled to be here. Natrona County 4H is a
7 youth organization that empowers, encourages, and educates
8 children in various project areas. And they have things they
9 would like to give you to welcome you. We are excited that
10 you're here. Thank you very much for all that you have
11 sacrificed to become citizens.

12 (Pause in the proceedings.)

13 THE COURT: I believe that -- just so that people are
14 aware, is that a piece of jade?

15 4H REPRESENTATIVE: It is a piece of jade. It has a
16 card that explains --

17 Go give this to the Judge.

18 THE COURT: So jade is the Wyoming rock. And so that
19 is also significant in terms of Wyoming as well as the United
20 States. So thank you very much for being here today and for
21 your participation.

22 Let me turn to the American Legion. Mr. Welch,
23 Mr. Laurenz, I believe you brought items to recognize our
24 newest citizens.

25 MR. LAURENZ: Your Honor, we thank you very much for

1 this privilege of having our different organizations here.
2 I'm with the United Councils of Natrona County. I am the
3 spokesman for them and for the other branches of the service.

4 You have six branches of the service who you are now
5 responsible for. You're the boss. You're in charge. You
6 write the checks. You have the oldest, the United States
7 Army; the United States Navy; the United States Marine Corps;
8 the United States Coast Guard; the United States Air Force;
9 and the United States Space Force.

10 I haven't met anybody from there yet, but this young
11 lady sitting right here, she's their boss, too. They belong
12 to the Air Force. They're the part of the Air Force.

13 We want to thank you and congratulate you very much.

14 First, I'm going to have the American Legion.
15 They're going to tell you who they are and -- who the members
16 of the American Legion are. Okay?

17 Please.

18 MR. WELCH: My name is Dean Welch. I'm the post
19 adjutant for American Legion Post 2 here in Casper. We have
20 over 50 different posts in the state, and we represent all
21 veterans, any veteran that has served honorably in the United
22 States since the Revolutionary War.

23 So all it takes is to have an honorable discharge
24 from the military and one day of active-duty service to be a
25 member of the American Legion.

1 So today I have my post commander, Larry Seems, and
2 my post vice commander, Larry Winzenried, who will present
3 gifts to you.

4 Thank you all for everything that you've done to get
5 here. I know it's a long journey, and I appreciate it. Thank
6 you.

7 (Pause in the proceedings.)

8 MR. LAURENZ: Our next branch of service is the
9 Disabled American Veterans. The Disabled American Veterans
10 are those who have served with boots on ground or in their
11 country and have been harmed in one way or another. Of all
12 the organizations, this organization probably carries the most
13 medals that can be awarded to anyone. They gave more than
14 just their life; they gave the parts of their bodies.

15 Unfortunately, our representative isn't here today.

16 MR. WINZENRIED: I am.

17 MR. LAURENZ: You're doing the DAV, are you?

18 Okay. Thank you, Larry.

19 But the DAV wants to say thank you. And the reason
20 they have served and served over and over and returned to
21 combat several times is because of the fact that -- sitting
22 right here, it's you all.

23 And we want to thank you this young lady because,
24 like all our military people, they took an extra step in the
25 oath that they just took that they're willing to give their

1 life for this country and for you. Thank you, ma'am.

2 After the Disabled American Veterans comes the VFW,
3 Veterans of Foreign Wars.

4 Are you representing the veterans of foreign wars,
5 too?

6 Veterans of Foreign Wars. VFW, Veterans of Foreign
7 War. Exactly. That means they left this country, and they
8 had boots on ground in a foreign country during combat time.
9 And these young men and women, every day we are losing
10 somebody. And right now, our navy, as you well know if you
11 listen to the news like I do and everybody else in this
12 country, we got ships out there that are being attacked daily.

13 God bless our veterans.

14 After the VFW -- I am lost, gentlemen. Please help
15 me out.

16 The Marine Corps League. Let me introduce you to
17 somebody who we all love and can't get -- can't live without
18 him. He's also in charge of the Natrona County Council. This
19 young Marine has kept me in line.

20 MR. SEEMS: That couldn't happen, George.

21 With that, first of all, I'd like to say
22 congratulations. Welcome to being a United States citizen.
23 I'm proud of you all.

24 At the same time, it's been spoken today about the
25 American Legion, the VFW, the Marine Corps League, and the

1 DAV, all the military organizations you hear, veterans never
2 stop giving. They answer the call of their country, and they
3 answer the call of their fellow veterans when they're in need
4 now.

5 So it's just another responsibility that goes along
6 with life and being free.

7 I'm going to end it with thank you very much.

8 (Pause in the proceedings.)

9 MR. LAURENZ: Gentlemen, if you all would please
10 rise.

11 Your Honor, once again, thank you so much for this
12 honor, and thank your staff. They are the greatest people in
13 the world. It's a pleasure to be here. I wish I could have
14 been here more often, but somebody has to keep the lights on
15 at Banner Hospital, and it seems like I've been chosen this
16 year. So, hopefully, I can give that job to somebody else.

17 Thank you, sir.

18 THE COURT: Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you for your
19 service.

20 Thank you, ladies, and thank you all for being here
21 and making this special for these new U.S. citizens.

22 One of the things that you've been imbued with now
23 that you have taken your oath of citizenship is the right to
24 vote, and not only have you been imbued with but you have the
25 obligation of.

1 And I mentioned letters that have been given to you.
2 Also, we would -- I would recognize Mr. Macklemore on behalf
3 of Senator Barrasso's office. I think he has some letters to
4 hand out to your newest U.S. citizens.

5 (Presentation of letters by Senator Barrasso's office.)

6 THE COURT: In addition to the obligation to vote,
7 there are phone numbers in those various letters; and when you
8 don't like what's going on, give them a call. Those are the
9 people who respond to those unwelcome things that you
10 perceive. And that is one of the great things about our
11 country is that you don't have to remain silent, but you
12 actually have to take an active voice and role in our
13 country's advancement, and that is how you do it is
14 participating.

15 So with that, let me recognize each of you, and I --
16 I know that you're -- not only were you in a foreign country,
17 but maybe English is not your first language. But I would
18 recognize each of you for the opportunity to introduce
19 yourself and any of your friends or family that are here today
20 that have supported you and gotten you here as well as
21 anything that you want to let us know that makes you excited
22 about becoming a citizen today.

23 And we could start with Mr. Salva.

24 MR. SALVA: Hi, I'm Maxim Salva. My mom is not here,
25 but she's the reason why me and my siblings are here. So

1 she -- we consider her one of the -- our first pilgrim in the
2 family. She has to come here by herself without family,
3 without the safety net of home. Then she found -- she built a
4 place for us here in the U.S.

5 So I'm very thankful for her and, of course, for the
6 veterans. It's like I have to -- I'm very thankful. I'm so
7 happy to be here. My wife is here, by the way.

8 THE COURT: Congratulations.

9 MR. SALVA: So I'm just so thankful, and I'm so
10 happy.

11 THE COURT: Welcome and congratulations. Thank you.
12 (Applause).

13 MS. BISSETT: I wasn't expecting this, but my name is
14 Carol Bissett. I have my husband and my son with here with
15 me. I came to the U.S. when I was 11. I was brought here
16 with my dad, who is also, obviously, an immigrant. He put me
17 through college. I'm a registered nurse, and we're stationed
18 at F.E. Warren, Cheyenne. My husband is active duty.

19 And this is a day I -- I'm very grateful for. I
20 never thought I would have, and I'm proud to be an American.
21 Thank you.

22 THE COURT: We're proud to have you.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. VIRACHACK: I don't really say much but I think
25 happy to be a citizen, and thank you very much.

1 THE COURT: Congratulations. Thank you.

2 MR. PHANPHONG: Hi. My name is Song. So I just come
3 with my brother-in-law and my friend. So thank you for
4 everything that -- I'm just so happy for today. Thank you so
5 much.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. JECHOREK: My name is Maja Jechorek. I'm here
8 with my husband and my two girls. I'm sorry. I've been here
9 for about 18 years, and I've waited for this moment for a very
10 long time.

11 My friend Jodi, my friend Rachel, and my friend
12 Amanda are here with me, as well. My whole family is still in
13 Poland. So America has been home for me for about 20 years
14 now, and this moment is just -- it feels very real. So thank
15 you for allowing me to become American citizen.

16 THE COURT: Thank you for wanting to.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. ORTIZ: Hi. I'm Cha Atienza. I usually change
19 my name to Ortiz to honor my dad, right there. And
20 I immigrated two years ago. My God. I'm going to cry. I got
21 stationed at F.E. Warren Air Force base here in Cheyenne,
22 Wyoming, and that's been good ever since I came here. And I
23 want to thank my dad for all of it. Thank you, Pa. I love
24 you.

25 (Applause.)

1 MS. DAVY: Hi. My name is Katherine Chin Davy. I'm
2 here with my family. My husband, he's a veteran, Jonathan
3 Davy. Here also with my friends, Jennifer and Keith. And
4 this is a very proud moment for me to become an American.
5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. VATANSEVER: Hi. My name is Emre Vatansever.
8 I'm here with my beautiful wife and three kids and in-laws.
9 My father-in-law is a retired Marine. And so I'm proud to be
10 American and having those beautiful kids, and I have them all
11 here. They are born in Lander. So we're proud to be a
12 country like -- free, right? So thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. BORUNDA: Hi. My name is Maria, and I'm here
15 with my friend Jessenia, and I'm coming here to the Uniteds
16 when I'm half 16. And I'm so happy today for make a citizen.
17 And so my family is in Mexico now, so I'm sad for that. But
18 I'm so happy for my friend coming with me, and thank you.
19 Love you.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. SPENCER: Hello. My name is Oksana Spencer. And
22 the reason I'm here is right here with us, my husband and my
23 son. So it's going to be five years since I'm here. Not that
24 long, but I fell in love in this country. And I will say more
25 I fell in love with the people of this country. I'm really

1 thankful that all of you right now here to share this special
2 day for us. Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. STEWART: Hi. I am Gemma from Philippines. My
5 husband and my daughter are here right now with me, and I'm so
6 thankful for my husband. If it's not because of him, I
7 wouldn't be here right now. And he keep saying that now that
8 I am citizen, I can divorce him. It's a joke.

9 I've been waiting for this day, actually, and I'm so
10 thankful and proud that I am an American citizen now. Thank
11 you.

12 (Applause.)

13 THE COURT: Thank you all for the sacrifices you've
14 made and those around you that have made and the support
15 you've been given.

16 I would recognize Mr. Kubichek on behalf of the
17 United States Attorney General for some remarks.

18 MR. KUBICHEK: Welcome. It's a privilege I get every
19 now and again to come to court with a dead-bang winner, which
20 is my motion to admit citizens into formal citizenship. I
21 haven't lost a citizen yet, so I'm fairly proud of that, over
22 close to 25, 28 years. And you all didn't disappoint today,
23 so thank you.

24 And to harken back a bit to the President's video,
25 we're not like a lot of countries, and you all know that.

1 You've all been here for a while. So you kind of -- you kind
2 of have the sense of the territory. We're not all from one
3 religious tradition or one ethnic group or race or any of
4 that. We started out, by design, as an amalgamation of people
5 from different countries, different religious traditions.

6 And what united us was a set of principles of
7 democracy and government. And that's all embodied, as you all
8 know, in the Constitution. You all had to study it, you know.
9 I didn't have to study it. I got a pass. I got born up the
10 street here, you know. And so I was automatically a citizen.

11 You all had to get here, which isn't always the
12 easiest thing. And we think about, you know, on this day, the
13 tens of thousands of people who would like to be here today
14 with us who have walked from Columbia and Brazil and places.
15 This being a distant dream, you know, and one probably for
16 most all of them impossible to achieve.

17 You all have made it here, and you've gone through
18 the process. You've taken the tests. You passed the
19 background. And so today, having taken the oath, you are, as
20 the President said, the equivalent of all of us. You're a
21 citizen.

22 And that's -- that's a big deal. As you said, we're
23 all different. We all come from different places, but
24 something happened today that was interesting. How many of
25 you were here seven years ago?

1 And how many of you participated in the eclipse?

2 All right. Was that the most magical thing that ever
3 happened to you or what? I was following it on The Weather
4 Channel, which is really my main outlet these days, and they
5 had wonderful coverage starting in Texas all the way up -- I
6 quit in Cleveland because I had to go to work.

7 But what was interesting to me in relation to today
8 here was -- and it was actually an observation by Stephanie
9 Abrams down in Frederick [sic], Texas, which is just out a
10 little west of Austin up in hill country, was that there was
11 this incredible amalgamation of human beings who all shared
12 jointly in a wonderful event, and they were one people. For
13 that four minutes of totality, they were one people joined by
14 a miracle.

15 Well, you know, there's a lot of rough-and-tumble in
16 American society, and we all know that. But I thought, you
17 know, we are capable of appreciating together amazing things.
18 And the fact that you're here is an amazing thing.

19 One of the reasons we're all here is because of these
20 guys, you know. They represent -- and our young lady in the
21 Air Force is a next generation of that -- why we're still
22 here, why we're still able to be here. It would be good if we
23 didn't need any military, wouldn't it? If we could just all
24 be good. But we know that's not our world.

25 And these individuals and our newest citizen over

1 here signed up and made a promise that, if called upon, they
2 would put their lives on the line, and they -- these guys did,
3 in defense of our freedoms, our Constitution, and all of that.

4 So one of the things that's important about these
5 ceremonies is we celebrate these guys, you know. They're
6 getting old. Thank God we've got somebody young coming along.
7 Every time I see these guys, I worry, you know, God, you know,
8 are they all going to be here in May?

9 But -- and ditto our ladies who represent the
10 Daughters of the American Revolution. They represent
11 traditions going back all the way to the founding of our
12 Republic, and we honor them today because that reminds us of
13 the scary sacrifices that our forebearers had to make, you
14 know.

15 We don't think about it much, but if you think about
16 the Fathers of our Constitution and what an incredibly brave
17 act that was -- you know, a bunch of -- and they were rich
18 landowners. They were fine. They didn't need to do that. I
19 mean, they had -- but they were political people in the best
20 sense of the word who believed it was unfair that this foreign
21 potentate in England decided everything about their lives.
22 And they had no -- they had no recourse.

23 And so they said, We're done. And they drafted the
24 Declaration of Independence and declared themselves separate
25 from England, the most powerful country at the time in the

1 world. And they immediately put a wanted poster on their
2 back. I think it was Benjamin Franklin said at the time, you
3 know, We all got to stay together on this thing or we are
4 going to hang separately.

5 And they had death warrants out for every one of
6 them. But they were brave enough -- as these guys were
7 brave -- to sign up and go to battle if necessary to protect
8 us.

9 So we have long traditions we celebrate today. But
10 what the eclipse teaches us is that we can all be together,
11 you know, for important stuff. What I'm going to ask you to
12 do is let's be together on less huge things, you know. We
13 don't have to agree -- won't ever agree, all of us, on the big
14 political issues of the day, and that's the rough-and-tumble
15 nature of our democracy, you know.

16 But it's interesting, I -- over the weekend I read a
17 set of polls that were conducted by the Associated Press along
18 with a -- I don't know remember which university it was. And
19 it said, you know, on most -- on most of the big issues of the
20 day, we all pretty much agree.

21 So, you know, if you just watch the evening news and
22 you see everybody mad at each other all the time, you think,
23 My God, how are we even -- you know, how are we even able to
24 make it another week?

25 Well, and we are because that isn't who we are. And,

1 you know, there was incredible unanimity out there among
2 people who said, Yeah, our local governments, our state
3 governments, are running good, they're indispensable to our
4 way of life, in broad support. Less so on the Federal level
5 because that's where all the fighting and the fireworks go on;
6 but even there, a lot of support.

7 So when you see all of these broadcasts and news
8 stories about how divided America is, yeah, maybe on some
9 stuff. But when you go to the grocery store and you look at
10 your fellow citizens, they all smile at you, you know, don't
11 they? Nobody looks -- around here, in particular, I mean,
12 Wyoming has always been a place where -- and probably that
13 goes back to our pioneer roots, you know. You can't be too
14 picky about who your friends are because we all need each
15 other out here.

16 You know, I'm reminded of a time when I was traveling
17 from Casper to Laramie during some questionable weather. And
18 I pulled over to the side of the road because I wanted to do a
19 little something and I didn't want to be driving with one hand
20 and doing something with another. And I pulled over. I'm
21 there for about ten minutes. A car pulls up and a --
22 actually, it was a single woman who pulled over to make sure I
23 was okay. That was -- that was here.

24 And, you know, maybe that wouldn't happen in
25 downtown Chicago, but a person pulled over to make sure I was

1 all right. And you see that all the time here. And I -- like
2 I said, I think some of that goes back to our heritage.

3 But all of which says, you know, my message today is
4 let's take care of each other, you know. Let's -- now that
5 you're -- and you all know -- you've been here long enough.
6 You know what our world is like here. Let's just take small
7 steps. A whole bunch of little steps make a big deal, you
8 know.

9 President Bush -- the first President Bush had a
10 program he initiated, which some people made fun of. It was
11 called the thousand points of light. The idea was that if all
12 of us get together and volunteer on doing something to make
13 our communities better, you know, we -- and even just a little
14 involvement, if we do that, maybe your individual contribution
15 isn't going to change the world, but thousands and thousands
16 of individual little contributions do.

17 And we can't get to the thousands and thousands
18 unless each of us participate on our own.

19 So anyway, thank you again on behalf of the Attorney
20 General and the President. This is a big deal, a big deal for
21 you all and a big deal for us, too. It tells us periodically
22 that we're still worth it, you know. You make it worth it to
23 us, too.

24 So bless you all. Have a lovely time being a
25 citizen. Go out and make the world a little bit better one

1 day at a time.

2 And some of you will get a notice from Judge
3 Skavdahl -- he's in charge of this -- to come down here and be
4 jurors. That's the other thing that's important about
5 America. We still have a rule of law here. It's the most
6 important thing. And one of your jobs now will be to come
7 down and participate and be jurors and decide cases for us.

8 So when you get that notice, sign up. Don't make up
9 excuses. We'll appreciate that.

10 So thank you all. It's been an honor being here
11 today and to welcome you into citizenship. I'm proud of each
12 and every one of you.

13 (Applause.)

14 THE COURT: Thank you Mr. Kubichek.

15 Well, I always enjoy hearing from you all when you
16 talk about what brought you here today and how you were able
17 to be here, where you've come from and what you've overcome.

18 20 years on a journey with your new family but your
19 other family being separated.

20 Your mom's sacrifice to get you and your siblings.

21 Your father's sacrifice in bringing you here, and
22 changing your name to recognize your father's contributions.

23 Coming from a country that -- I mean, in America, we
24 are -- we have these problems and these crises, but we don't
25 have bombs every night hitting our towns. We don't have

1 family that we're wondering if they're going to be alive
2 tomorrow because they got hit by a Scud from Russia.

3 There are so many reasons for us as Americans to
4 appreciate the opportunities and the rights that we have, and
5 you remind us that that journey does not come without
6 sacrifice by you. Some of us have been gifted that, but,
7 unfortunately, some of us forget that gift.

8 And it's important that we don't and that you remind
9 us and that you enrich us, that you give us some of that
10 galvanizing reason to join together as fellow citizens and as
11 families and support each other, because that is what the
12 United States of America is built upon. It's not built upon
13 one philosophy. It's built upon the belief that we all stand
14 together and that we appreciate each other's diversity and
15 respect each other.

16 Thank you for coming here today and doing what you've
17 done to get here and the sacrifices you've made.

18 Thank you for the friends and family who have made
19 those sacrifices.

20 Thank you for the ladies and gentlemen whose families
21 and who themselves have made immense sacrifices.

22 We're here altogether and have the rights that we
23 have because we stand together, and I appreciate everyone's
24 contribution to make today what it is for you. And I hope it
25 continues to be a wonderful and blessed opportunity in life.

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Congratulations. With that, we'll stand in recess.
(Proceedings concluded at 4:17 p.m., April 8, 2024.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, MEGAN E. STRAWN, Federal Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court for the District of Wyoming, a Registered Professional Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, do hereby certify that I reported by machine shorthand the proceedings contained herein on the aforementioned subject on the date herein set forth, and that the foregoing 29 pages constitute a full, true, and correct transcript.

Dated this 22nd day of April 2024.

/s/ Megan E. Strawn

MEGAN E. STRAWN
Registered Professional Reporter
Certified Realtime Reporter