

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
December 15, 2022
1:40 p.m.

PABLO ANDRES LONDONO OJEDA,
ALEXANDER CLAUDE NARTEY, BARBARA
ELEANOR BILLY, ROBERTO
NAVARRETE, OMAR HUSSEIN ABBAS AL
SHADEEDI, BAYDAA SALMAN ABBAS
AL KHAFAJI, LORLYN ALOJADO BATH,
FIDEL VALLADARES TREJO, CRISTIAN
ALEJANDRO VARGAS MANZO, JOSE
MANUEL CHAVEZ, LUZ ELENA RIOS,
SANIYA KHAN, CRISTINE GULTIANO
PAG ONG MCLAUGHLIN, SAMUEL
CISNEROS MIRANDA, DANIELA
BATRINCEA, CINTIA PATRICIA ORTIZ
NIETO, TRAM BAO NGUYEN, AND
SOPHIE JOSEPHINE BROUSSARD,

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:

For the Government: DAVID KUBICHEK
United States Attorney's Office
100 East B Street, Suite 2211
Casper, Wyoming 82602

Court Reporter: MEGAN E. STRAWN, RPR, CRR
Official U.S. Court Reporter
111 South Wolcott Street, Room 217
Casper, Wyoming 82601

*Proceedings recorded by stenography; transcript produced by
computer-aided transcription.*

1 (Proceedings commenced at 1:40 p.m., December 15, 2022.)

2 THE COURTROOM DEPUTY: Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye.
3 The United States District Court for the District of Wyoming
4 is now in session, the Honorable Scott W. Skavdahl presiding.
5 God save the United States and this Honorable Court.

6 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

7 Good afternoon, prospective citizens and friends and
8 family of those who are prospective citizens and those who are
9 virtually joining us, as well. It is with great privilege and
10 honor that I am able to conduct today's ceremonies today.
11 I'll suspend the local rules on cameras and recording devices
12 and let you take pictures as you wish. I would ask, however,
13 that if you could silence your devices so that we don't have
14 any phone calls coming in.

15 We're going to have a few pings coming in on the Zoom
16 from time to time, but we'll try to minimize those.

17 It's a tradition at the beginning of these
18 ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, to recognize citizens and
19 families of those citizens who have paid the ultimate price in
20 defending what so many people in this world seek, and that is
21 the freedom and the benefits of becoming a United States
22 citizen.

23 As of this morning, 7,076 American men and women have
24 been killed in action while involved in military operations in
25 the Middle East. In addition, 53,337 United States military

1 personnel have been wounded in action during those same
2 military operations.

3 Let us take a moment of silence and recognize those
4 American heroes and their families whose sacrifice cannot be
5 measured and whose loss will never be recovered.

6 (Moment of silence.)

7 THE COURT: Thank you. The United States District
8 Court for the District of Wyoming is in special session for
9 the naturalization of foreign nationals to be United States
10 citizens. It is with great honor, pride, and privilege that
11 I'm able to conduct today's ceremony naturalizing 18 new
12 United States citizens from 11 different countries around the
13 world.

14 The Federal District Court of Wyoming, including
15 Judges Johnson and Freudenthal, extend their congratulations
16 to you, your family, and friends.

17 I would ask at this time if Ms. Fitzgerald with the
18 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service could make a roll
19 call of the prospective applicants for U.S. citizenship, and
20 if you could please raise your hand to verify you are here
21 today when she calls your name.

22 Ms. Fitzgerald.

23 MS. FITZGERALD: Thank you, Your Honor.

24 THE COURT: Thank you.

25 MS. FITZGERALD: Pablo Andres Londono Ojeda,

1 Alexander Claude Nartey, Barbara Eleanor Billy, Roberto
2 Navarrete, Omar Hussein Abbas Al Shadeedi, Baydaa Salman Abbas
3 Al Khafaji, Lorlyn Alojado Bath, Fidel Valladares Trejo,
4 Cristian Alejandro Vargas Manzo, Jose Manuel Chavez, Luz Elena
5 Rios, Saniya Khan, Cristine Gultiano Pag Ong McLaughlin,
6 Samuel Cisneros Miranda, Daniela Batrincea, Cintia Patricia
7 Ortiz Nieto, Tram Bao Nguyen, and Sophie Josephine Broussard.

8 Thank you, Your Honor.

9 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Fitzgerald.

10 And we're missing one Canadian, but we'll take care
11 of that later on.

12 One of the most fundamental things we do as United
13 States citizens is pledge our allegiance to the flag of the
14 United States of America. Restating that allegiance takes on
15 special meaning, but we recognize the various sacrifices that
16 have been made for people to become and to serve and be and
17 enjoy the freedoms of being a U.S. citizen.

18 At this time, I would ask if you could join me,
19 please, in pledging your allegiance to the flag and then
20 remain standing for the playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

21 (Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.)

22 (Playing "The Start-Spangled Banner.")

23 THE COURT: Thank you. Please be seated.

24 I would ask at this time if the Clerk of Court could
25 play the message from President Biden.

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

2 THE COURT: Thank you.

3 At this time, I would recognize Mr. David Kubichek,
4 Wyoming Assistant United States Attorney, representing the
5 Attorney General for the United States, Mr. Merrick Garland.

6 MR. KUBICHEK: May it please the Court.

7 THE COURT: Counsel.

8 MR. KUBICHEK: Today, Your Honor, before the Court
9 are individuals for a hearing on their petitions for
10 naturalization. Each of these prospective citizens has
11 successfully completed all of the steps necessary for
12 eligibility for United States citizenship. Moreover, the U.S.
13 Citizenship and Immigration Service has completed its
14 processes with respect to each of these individuals, including
15 the necessary background investigations.

16 Having successfully negotiated all of those hurdles,
17 we are advised that each of them is well qualified to be
18 admitted to citizenship. Therefore, Your Honor, the United
19 States hereby moves the Court to admit each of these
20 individuals to United States citizenship upon their taking of
21 the required oath.

22 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Kubichek. Let me sign
23 this before I forget.

24 So, ladies and gentlemen, that means there's only one
25 thing left for you to do, and that is to take your oath. And

1 on the petition of the United States, the Court would find
2 that each of the applicants identified has satisfied the legal
3 requirements to become citizens of the United States and,
4 therefore, would grant the petition and enter the order
5 allowing these petitioners to become citizens of the United
6 States of America.

7 And I would direct the filing of that order by the
8 Clerk of Court upon the taking of their oath.

9 And if, at this time, each of you could stand and
10 raise your right hand and repeat after me:

11 I, state your name --

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

13 THE COURT: Hereby declare, on oath --

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

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

16 THE PETITIONERS: -- that I absolutely and

17 entirely --

18 THE COURT: -- renounce and abjure --

19 THE PETITIONERS: -- renounce and abjure --

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

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

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

23 THE PETITIONERS: -- to any foreign prince,

24 potentate --

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

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

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

3 THE PETITIONERS: -- of whom of which --

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

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

6 THE COURT: -- a subject or citizen --

7 THE PETITIONERS: -- a subject or citizen --

8 THE COURT: -- that I will support and defend --

9 THE PETITIONERS: -- that I will support and
10 defend --

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

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

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

14 THE PETITIONERS: -- of the United States of
15 America --

16 THE COURT: -- against all enemies --

17 THE PETITIONERS: -- against all enemies --

18 THE COURT: -- foreign and domestic --

19 THE PETITIONERS: -- foreign and domestic --

20 THE COURT: -- that I will bear true faith --

21 THE PETITIONERS: -- that I will bear true faith --

22 THE COURT: -- and allegiance to the same --

23 THE PETITIONERS: -- and allegiance to the same --

24 THE COURT: -- that I will bear arms --

25 THE PETITIONERS: -- that I will bear arms --

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

2 THE PETITIONERS: -- on behalf of the United

3 States --

4 THE COURT: -- when required by law.

5 THE PETITIONERS: -- when required by law.

6 THE COURT: I take this obligation freely --

7 THE PETITIONERS: I take this obligation freely --

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

9 THE PETITIONERS: -- without any mental

10 reservation --

11 THE COURT: -- or purpose of evasion.

12 THE PETITIONERS: -- or purpose of evasion.

13 THE COURT: So help me God.

14 THE PETITIONERS: So help me God.

15 THE COURT: Congratulations, citizens.

16 (Applause.)

17 THE COURT: At this time, we'll present the

18 certificates. I understand you've already received letters --

19 and you can go ahead and have a seat. You have received

20 letters from the congressional delegation. Those letters

21 should give you the contact information for those people in

22 Washington, D.C., to whom you wish to complain or to express

23 your happiness to.

24 Either way, that is part of the process that is

25 extremely important that we engage in in this country, and I

1 encourage you and insist that you become part of that process
2 and the voting and selection of our leaders.

3 (Distribution of certificates.)

4 THE COURT: So one of the traditions that I have
5 developed during these proceedings is to have each of you just
6 briefly tell us if you have anyone here, friends or family
7 today; anyone that you wish to thank, virtually or otherwise;
8 and one thing about today that makes today special to you.

9 So I'd ask the Clerk of Court if you could pass
10 around the microphone.

11 Mr. Vargas -- I'm sorry. Mr. Ojeda? Pablo?

12 MR. OJEDA: Yes, Your Honor. I want to thank my
13 family. I have someone really special with me. He's like a
14 second father, if you can call it that, since I came to the
15 U.S.

16 This is an honor, and I see it as a privilege to
17 become a citizen. And I'm just so -- it's like a dream come
18 true. You know, since I was little, you know, just having --
19 or seeing the flag and now wearing it and now having this
20 is -- it's priceless. I just thank God and thankful for all
21 the support of my family that have helped me through the way
22 to get -- to become a citizen.

23 THE COURT: How many years has it taken you?

24 MR. OJEDA: Well, I've been living here for 23 years,
25 so . . .

1 THE COURT: Congratulations.

2 MR. OJEDA: Thank you.

3 THE COURT: Thank you.

4 Mr. Narthey?

5 MR. NARTEY: I would like to thank everybody. My
6 family is not here, but this country has been good to me, and
7 I would like to thank every American citizen. That's all I
8 can say.

9 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

10 MR. NARTEY: Thank you.

11 THE COURT: Ms. Billy?

12 MS. BILLY: Good afternoon to everybody. I want to
13 say thanks to everyone and the USCIS personnel that helped.
14 Thank you all. I'm so glad to be a citizen at this time. I
15 love America. Okay? I want to say to my friend who is there
16 for me, thanks. God bless.

17 THE COURT: Congratulations. Thank you.

18 MR. NAVARRETE: I would like to thank God first off,
19 and I'm blessed to be here, and I got my friends over there.
20 I'm just so happy. After 22 years, finally got what I wanted,
21 and now it's to accomplish more things in life and just move
22 forward. And thank you guys, everybody. Yeah.

23 THE COURT: Congratulations. Thank you.

24 MR. AL SHADEEDI: Thank you for giving me the chance
25 to thanks all of you -- all of you. Thank you, Your Honor. I

1 would like to give a special thanks for Officer Fitzgerald.
2 She is a very nice lady. Thank you so much. And I would like
3 to thanks all the U.S. government and the brave heroes who
4 they died with me in the mission in Iraq. They are still on
5 my mind. They was really brave heroes. I still have shrapnel
6 in my body, and I was really proud of that because they was my
7 friends. And I wish -- I thanks all of them, alive and the
8 people that die with me in the mission. I would like to thank
9 all of you.

10 God bless America. Thank you, all of you, because
11 all of you was my family. Thank you, sir.

12 THE COURT: Thank you.

13 MS. AL KHAFAJI: I will thank everyone here. I'm so
14 glad to be here, but I want to -- I'm so, so happy, but I want
15 to thank my husband. I want to talk with him just to say
16 thank you, because he's so tired now. Thank you.

17 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

18 MS. BATH: Hello, everyone. First of all, I would
19 like to thank God and especially my husband and my kids and my
20 family and my friends. We've been through a lot of this, but
21 I'm here now. I've become a citizen. I'm very happy. I'm
22 proud to be a citizen, and thank you all. God bless America.

23 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

24 MR. TREJO: Hi, everyone. I'm very happy today. I
25 honestly thanks God first for just the opportunity to be a

1 citizen of the United States. Thank you for all your work.
2 I'm very happy, and God bless America.

3 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

4 MR. VARGAS MANZO: I can't say much. This is my home
5 now. My good friend Natalie and my family, my friends. I'm
6 just happy. Thank you, Officer. And what can I say? I'm
7 home. Thank you.

8 THE COURT: Well, welcome home. Congratulations.

9 MR. CHAVEZ: Thank you for God. Thank you for Your
10 Honor. Thank you for my friends, American friends, Mexican
11 friends. Thank you for my family. I love you, my wife.

12 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

13 MS. RIOS: This is Luz. I came from a little town in
14 Mexico. I thanks everything to my husband. I love my mother.
15 She's watching me. My kids, stepdad, my friends, everybody is
16 watching. Coworkers from district court. I'm so happy. You
17 can't imagine how hard it is to get this. I mean, I imagined
18 how hard it is to get here, but it's the best feeling. The
19 best feeling. And I love United States. I choose to be here
20 for a better place to live. And I'm dreaming the best -- this
21 is the best dream. And I'm -- I'm here. Thank you.

22 THE COURT: We're glad your dream came true.
23 Congratulations.

24 MS. KHAN: Hi. Thanks to all of you. Especially, I
25 would like to thanks my husband. He's not here because I have

1 just a newborn, so he's taking care of her in the front,
2 sitting outside. So I would like thanks to him. Because of
3 him I'm here, and I'm a citizen because of him. And thanks to
4 all of you. You join us in this precious moment of our life.
5 Thank you so much.

6 THE COURT: Congratulations. Thank you.

7 MS. McLAUGHLIN: Hello, everyone. First of all, I
8 would like to thank you for the Good Lord that we are able to
9 make it to be here today despite of the very bad weather this
10 morning. But I'm so happy that I made it, you know, for five
11 years of working on it, and finally it -- you know, I get the
12 citizenship. Thank you guys so much.

13 And I would like to thank for my husband, Mike
14 McLaughlin, for all the love and support. And yeah, I hope
15 that everybody will have a good day. Thank you.

16 THE COURT: Thank you. Congratulations.

17 MR. MIRANDA: I want to thank my beautiful wife
18 sitting over there and my two -- my boy and my girl, you know,
19 that were born here. They're U.S. citizens, and they make me
20 proud that they're -- I got a good education because this
21 country made it possible. I don't know -- I waited 30 --
22 what, 38 years, and I sometimes wonder, Why did I wait so
23 long? But I always feel that this country -- that I belong in
24 this country. Even though I came from Mexico, I almost never
25 visit Mexico. I like the people. I never did like the

1 government.

2 But, you know, I'm proud to be an American now. And
3 I really believe that -- I feel like I belong somewhere now,
4 truly belong somewhere. You always feel like you're not from
5 here. You're from over there, and you're in the middle. But
6 now, it's -- you know, it happened. I'm so happy about it.
7 So I thank you, everyone.

8 THE COURT: Congratulations.

9 MS. BATRINCEA: Hello. My name is Daniela, plus one
10 more proud citizen. I came from a country called Moldova, but
11 now, here is my home. And I could relate pretty much with
12 everyone, with everything being said here.

13 I want to thank to my husband and to my son. He is
14 4. He said, Mom, today you're one of us. I'm like, Yeah.
15 And so thank you for this opportunity. Finally I found my
16 freedom. Thank you.

17 THE COURT: Congratulations, and thank you.

18 MS. ORTIZ NIETO: Hi, everyone. My name is Cintia.
19 I would like to thank my husband and my family, friends,
20 everyone that's here, but especially my husband, without his
21 support I would not be able to be here today. And thank you,
22 everyone, for giving us the opportunity to be here. This is a
23 great country, and I'm very happy to be a citizen now.

24 THE COURT: We're happy to have you.
25 Congratulations.

1 MS. NGUYEN: Hello, everybody. Today I just want to
2 say thank you to my officer. She gave me opportunity to
3 become a U.S. citizen. And say thank you to my family who
4 always be there to support me. Thank you so much.

5 THE COURT: You're welcome. Congratulations.

6 MS. BROUSSARD: Thank you. It's such an honor to be
7 here today. My name is Sophie Broussard, and such an
8 emotional moment. I'm just so grateful to be here. I have
9 been living in Wyoming for 20 years, and my husband and I have
10 made a beautiful life together here. My three children were
11 all born in Cody, and we feel fortunate to be raising them in
12 a place with so many wonderful opportunities.

13 We have an incredible support system and have made
14 many amazing friends here. I also want to thank my husband
15 Troy's family in Louisiana for being my initial sponsors and
16 being so supportive of my journey. I have loved building a
17 life for myself here in Wyoming, and I am looking forward to
18 continuing my life as an American citizen.

19 Thank you so much, everyone.

20 THE COURT: Congratulations. Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 THE COURT: At this time, the Court would recognize
23 Mr. Kubichek on behalf of the United States for any remarks
24 regarding the new citizens.

25 MR. KUBICHEK: Thank you, Your Honor.

1 I'm always a bit blown away by this experience,
2 hearing you tell a bit of your stories about how you came to
3 be here and go through the work -- and it is work -- to pass
4 all the tests and the backgrounds and all of that to become a
5 U.S. citizen today.

6 As the president said in his video, we feel really
7 blessed that you picked us. And you all have your own
8 individual stories about how you came to be here, and lots of
9 them were not easy. I know that. And I -- every time we have
10 a ceremony, I think about that. Because a lot of us here, you
11 know, we just got lucky. We just got born here. I didn't
12 have to work hard. I showed up at the Wyoming Medical Center
13 back in 1952, and there I was, and I was automatically a
14 citizen.

15 And lots of us take it for granted, and we take it
16 for granted less when we come to these ceremonies because
17 we're reminded of what a special privilege it is.

18 You know, we operate under a constitution. We're not
19 all the same here. I mean, look at you all. Look at each
20 other. You're not the same. You come from all different
21 parts of the world. You have different religious traditions
22 and different social traditions and the like. And the only
23 way we can keep this going -- because we're not all the
24 same -- we have to do what you swore to do today in your oath.
25 We have to support and defend our constitution. It's the only

1 thing that binds us together. We're not -- we don't come from
2 the same race, the same religious traditions, the same
3 political backgrounds, none of that. We're all -- we all left
4 different stories behind, and you're going to bring those with
5 you in terms of the way you deal with your lives.

6 You've got your traditions, and we want you to keep
7 those and share those with us, because understanding and
8 sharing your story makes us stronger. But there are special
9 responsibilities when you become a U.S. citizen. Lincoln, in
10 his Gettysburg Address in the middle of the Civil War, noted
11 that our country was based on a set of ideas that people --
12 that our country was conceived in the idea of liberty, but --
13 and our government would be by the people, for the people; but
14 for that all to work, we have to agree on certain principles.
15 We have to agree that our constitution gives us freedoms, and
16 often, freedoms unlike anywhere else in the world or like most
17 places in the world.

18 But with those freedoms comes responsibilities.
19 You've got to leave a lot of baggage behind sometimes. You
20 have the responsibility to participate. You don't have to
21 vote, but one of the things that sets us apart is the idea
22 that you can help pick your government. I mean, I'm part of
23 your government, and now I work for you, and so does the
24 judge, and so do the Congress people whose contact information
25 you got earlier. As the judge said, if you don't like the way

1 things go, you can call them up, or you can vote for somebody
2 else. And if enough of us agree that somebody else will be
3 voted for, we get new people.

4 But in order for it to work, also, you have to be
5 tolerant of each other. You know, you have to be willing to
6 understand that -- that because the only thing that binds us
7 together are a set of principles and ideas, we have to be
8 willing to open our ears and our hearts to each other
9 regardless of what we look like.

10 You know, we -- we don't have a country like some in
11 the world historically where people of a particular race were
12 in charge, and people who weren't a part of that race were
13 second-class citizens. You're all first-class citizens today.
14 And I don't care what your religious tradition is or your race
15 is or your color is. You are now part of us, and each of you
16 is deserving of the respect that comes with that.

17 But with that respect comes an obligation for each of
18 you to respect each other. It doesn't mean you have to agree
19 with each other all the time, but you have to respect each
20 other as a citizen.

21 You all who have gone through all of this -- these
22 classes and all of this stuff about becoming an American are
23 probably more attuned to that. A lot of us who were born here
24 sometimes take that for granted. We think, Well, we were born
25 here. We somehow own this place differently. And that's not

1 so. We're all equal today.

2 And I am grateful to each of you. The United States
3 government, Attorney General, the President are grateful to
4 you for coming here and doing this.

5 So participate. Be involved in your communities as
6 citizens. Make us better. You can do that, and we depend on
7 that. Vote. Once in a while, some number of you are going to
8 get a notice in the mail that you have to come down here and
9 be jurors. That's one of the most important things that
10 separates us from the rest of the world is we have a justice
11 system that has a set of rules and principles that we follow.

12 I don't get to decide if you go to jail or not or if
13 you're going to be convicted of a crime. It's not me. He
14 doesn't get to decide, either. A group of 12 of you get to
15 decide. And the idea is that the collective wisdom of a dozen
16 of you to decide whether someone committed a crime, for
17 example, or should be held accountable for a tort in civil
18 court you get to decide because, collectively, your wisdom is
19 better than mine and better than his.

20 And that's one of the things that's most important
21 about us and that separates us from a lot of the world.
22 You're the judges, and that's just a magnificent part of our
23 system. People decide lots. We vote. We decide in the
24 criminal justice system, because it's your country. It's not
25 mine individually. It's not the judge's. It's yours

1 collectively. And for it to keep going, for it to endure, we
2 all have to keep that in mind. We all have a stake in making
3 sure that the country that we're inheriting today is a country
4 we can pass on to our kids, and we can pass on a better
5 country if we work at it.

6 So thank you on behalf of the Attorney General of the
7 United States and all of us who collectively work in
8 government. You've made us better, you've made us proud, and
9 we're honored today that you're here with us. Thank you.

10 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Kubichek.

11 Well, a couple of things I'd mention: First, this is
12 an unscheduled ceremony. I think we had a request to conduct
13 an additional ceremony because there's been some backlog. And
14 I was asked to do that that, and I was more than happy,
15 because these ceremonies are the few moments in my job where
16 people go out of this courtroom with a smile on their face and
17 not in handcuffs. So this is really a wonderful opportunity.

18 It's also a wonderful opportunity because it's where
19 I get to hear how impactful the opportunity to become a United
20 States citizen is to those who weren't gifted or given it
21 without cost or without thought. You have had to work for it.
22 You've come from countries -- Iran. I can't imagine the
23 differences. Those people that were left behind, those people
24 that were killed, those people that have been injured trying
25 to become a United States citizen.

1 Yesterday on the news, people standing in line
2 crossing the Rio Grande, risking their lives, their children's
3 lives to try to make it into the United States.

4 I hope that is always the case, not because I want to
5 see sorrow or tragedy, but I want this country to be the place
6 that everybody wants to be. And it will only be that way if
7 we respect and understand and appreciate how good we have it
8 here, and that is something I hope will never be lost.
9 Because if it is, if people aren't willing to sacrifice,
10 sadly, to make it into this country, we've lost our value in
11 some ways.

12 I had to chuckle the other day watching -- and I'm
13 not a soccer fan, but the World Cup. Iran played the United
14 States. And I thought -- you know, in a lot of ways, the news
15 media portrayed it as this big political clash. At the end of
16 that game, which was an incredible game by both sides -- but
17 at the end of that game, those players from each side hugged
18 and thanked and congratulated each other and comforted the
19 losing team. Why? Because of the love and respect that they
20 shared for each other despite the differences in philosophy,
21 despite the difference in team that they were playing for.
22 They shared a common goal, and that is to do the best that
23 they could with what they had and where we were and achieve
24 what they could.

25 So I hope that no one is injured in the world of

1 trying to become a United States citizen, but I also hope that
2 the value in becoming one is such that we all never forget
3 those that haven't made it, those that want to make it, and
4 why they want to make it and that we continue to prosper and
5 respect each other.

6 No person or country or government is perfect.
7 Nonetheless, hopefully, as a country, we can collectively
8 recognize our failings and seek to improve who we are as
9 people and as a country. To improve, we must all participate
10 less we stand silent and fail to exercise our rights and
11 support our constitution and recognize it is we, the people,
12 who must exercise support and defend our rights.

13 We run the risk of extinction just like any other
14 government. Our constitution is simply a piece of paper
15 without people believing in it, defending it, and standing up
16 for it and its values.

17 Thank you for wanting to become a part of this
18 incredible country. While this country is not perfect, for
19 over 240 years, it has provided a sanctuary for freedom and
20 served as an incubator for the opportunity and advancement of
21 all.

22 With all your energy, skills, and talents, I
23 encourage you to continue to make us a more diverse and
24 talented country and better democracy. Exercise your rights
25 and freedoms but also respect and appreciate the divergent

1 views and beliefs that make this country what it is.

2 This is the greatest nation on earth, but to remain
3 so, we must appreciate how and why we enjoy the freedoms we
4 do. It is not because we all think and believe the same, but
5 rather, because we respect each other's diversity of beliefs
6 which allows we, the people, to govern ourselves.

7 You are now part of the richly woven fabric of the
8 United States of America. We do not exist as individuals but
9 as a collection of many, united to form a more perfect union.
10 May that always be the way it is, and may God continue to
11 bless the United States of America and each of you.

12 Congratulations. We'll stand in recess.

13 (Proceedings concluded at 2:24 p.m., December 15, 2022.)

14 * * * * *

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

