

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Remarks by Secretary of the Treasury Janet L. Yellen at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Ceremony at George Washington's Mount Vernon

July 4, 2022

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Director Rosenberg. And good morning, my fellow citizens! I am honored to be the first to greet you with those words.

It is a tremendous privilege for me to share this day with you. For all of you here, today is the culmination of a long road – a road that for many of you began decades ago. The 52 of you journeyed from 42 different countries to America. Even though it was not always easy, you made your life in this country – one step at a time. Along the way, you have already enriched our nation. Several of you have even served in our Armed Forces, honorably protecting our nation before becoming a citizen.

Whether you were born in Ukraine or El Salvador, Iran or Iraq, South Africa or South Korea, you have now completed a process that may be difficult but is fundamentally American. As each of you know better than most, the American story is the immigrant story.

Immigration is not only consistent with our values. In America, it is who we are. 45 million immigrants live in the United States today, which means that more than one in eight of us were born elsewhere.

Your decision to come to America and pursue a life here has made our country better. It's not just that you make our culture richer or our neighborhoods more vibrant. You make our economy stronger as well. Immigration is essential to building a strong labor force, generating new innovations, and growing our economy.

For decades, immigrants have been a key contributor to our economic output and productivity. For instance, from 2010 to 2018, foreign-born workers accounted for nearly 60% of growth in the U.S. labor force. Immigrants strengthen our workforce, and, in the process, help drive the resiliency and vitality of our economy.

At Treasury, we are working to make sure all Americans – including immigrants – have every tool at their disposal to succeed. We've done this by supporting low-income and working-class people throughout the pandemic, injecting additional capital into small businesses, and investing in communities to ensure that the pandemic did not lead to long-term economic scarring. Our goal is to build an America that many of you came here for: one of opportunity and possibility.

These are Treasury and Biden Administration policies, but they are also personal to me. My father's family immigrated to America from Eastern Poland, and my mother's family from Germany. If they had not made the brave decision to come to a new country, I would not be standing here today. A few generations ago, members of my family likely took the same oath you just did.

In fact, the oath you took is strikingly similar to the oath I took as Treasury Secretary. And it's quite close to the one each President repeats at their inauguration, as well as the one those of you who joined our Armed Forces recited upon enlisting. This is the genius of the Constitution that you and I have both now sworn to support and defend: it strives to be the ultimate equalizer. No matter your occupation or how long you have been in the United States, we bear the same privileges and responsibilities of our most important title: citizen.

You all know well the duties that come with citizenship: to vote, to get involved in your community, to listen to the voices of others, and to work towards a better America.

So congratulations again, my fellow Americans. I am honored to have been able to mark this milestone with you, and I look forward to your continued contributions to our country.

Now I'd like to invite Kimberly up to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

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