

## Daily Breeze

# Immigrants from some 20 countries become America's newest citizens aboard USS Iowa in San Pedro



*New US citizens recite the pledge of allegiance on the USS Iowa as part of a citizenship ceremony in San Pedro, CA, on Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2024. Forty-five people became naturalized US citizens in a ceremony on board the battleship in honor of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. (Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)*

By [Donna Littlejohn](#) | [dlittlejohn@scng.com](mailto:dlittlejohn@scng.com) | Daily Breeze

UPDATED: September 17, 2024 at 3:06 p.m.

They came for jobs, education and opportunity. But they also came for freedom.

Forty-five immigrants who had completed the long naturalization process took the oath to become official U.S. citizens on Tuesday, Sept. 17, during a ceremony aboard the [USS Battleship Iowa](#) at the Port of Los Angeles.

Appropriately, it also was Constitution Day, marking the historic signing of that document on Sept. 17, 1787.

[The ceremony](#), like others being held across the United States, provided a rite of passage for those taking the oath while reminding American-born attendees of the freedoms so many others do not have.

The process begins with a green card followed by a formal application for citizenship, interviews, an exam (covering basic civics and English), and the oath.

Asan Navied, 20, of Redondo Beach came from Russia and will graduate in 2026 from Cal State Long Beach as a geology major. He came for the educational opportunities but noted some of the difficulties in his homeland amid the war with Ukraine.

“Basically, life in Russia is nothing compared to here,” he said. “In Russia, the system is everybody doing the work for you. I kind of miss snow, but I prefer it here.”

The crowd of immigrants stood to recite the “Pledge of Allegiance,” sing the national anthem and raise their hands to take the oath of citizenship. They at times laughed, fell silent and shed a few tears as they marked the end of their journey.

“Today, we have much to celebrate,” Rachel Arias, section chief of the Los Angeles County Field Office for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, told the new citizens who had gathered on the Iowa’s deck with their families. “We celebrate you as well as Constitution Day and Citizenship Day.”

The call of countries brought each new citizen to their feet to be recognized amid applause — Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Italy, South Korea, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, Venezuela and Vietnam.

Afterward, the new [citizens collected their signed certificates](#) — a few already are members of the U.S. Armed Forces — and were on their way.

Fabiano Barbieri, 47, came to the U.S. from Brazil in 2010 when his technology company relocated to the U.S. After working with a green card for 10 years, he started the process to become a naturalized citizen, a process he said took about six months.

The U.S., he said, offers a better life for his son, 18, and daughter, 6. The family lives in Torrance.

Dee Chow, 54, came from Germany and has been in the U.S. and other countries working for several years. She initially lived in Boston, but through the years, married (her husband is from Singapore), earned a master’s degree from MIT, changed jobs and had a daughter in 2014. The family lives in San Pedro and because of the opportunities offered in the U.S., she and her husband are exploring their own market research start-up business.

Asked about life in America, she said: “It’s the land of the free.”

*Originally Published: September 17, 2024 at 3:05 p.m.*