



## Secretary Napolitano and Secretary Salazar Lead Naturalization Ceremony with USCIS Director Mayorkas

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### *Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Honored as an Outstanding American by Choice*

WASHINGTON—Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Alejandro Mayorkas today welcomed 50 new U.S. citizens representing 29 countries at a naturalization ceremony in Washington, DC. This was the capstone ceremony of USCIS' annual celebration surrounding Constitution Day and Citizenship Day (Sept. 17th).

"We have a strong tradition as a welcoming nation, and our efforts ensure that the United States continues to draw people from across the world who contribute in important and innovative ways," said Secretary Napolitano. "I am proud to recognize Madeleine Albright with the "Outstanding American By Choice" award and to welcome the new citizens here today and the thousands who have been naturalized over the past several weeks to our country."

During this year's celebration, USCIS has welcomed more than 27,000 new citizens during 285 naturalization ceremonies and partnered with the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS) to hold ceremonies at 14 national park sites across the country.

"The vast majority of Americans can trace their ancestry to someone who immigrated to this country seeking freedom, opportunity and a better life," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "I am proud to welcome our newest Americans at the Department of the Interior – just steps from the National Mall, a place that celebrates our history, our Constitution and our commitment to the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all our citizens."

During the ceremony, former Secretary of State Dr. Madeleine K. Albright was recognized for her significant contributions to her adopted country as an Outstanding American by Choice.

The Outstanding American by Choice initiative recognizes the achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship. Recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to this country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans.

"I am honored to participate in this celebration of citizenship and the constitution because, from our nation's earliest days, the United States has been enriched by the steady flow of immigrants to our shores," said Secretary Albright. "Attracted by America's promise, they have contributed immensely to the vitality of our neighborhoods, the health of our economy, the depth of our democracy, and the ongoing example of our unity."

In 1997, Dr. Albright was appointed as the first female Secretary of State and became, at that time, the highest ranking woman in the history of the U.S. government. As Secretary of State, Dr. Albright reinforced American alliances, advocated for democracy and human rights across the globe, and promoted U.S. trade, business, labor and environmental standards abroad.

For more information on USCIS and its programs, please visit [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or follow us on Twitter ([@uscis](https://twitter.com/uscis)), YouTube ([/uscis](https://www.youtube.com/uscis)) and the USCIS blog [The Beacon](http://thebeacon.uscis.gov).

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