

PRESS RELEASE
Jacksonville, Florida, June 23, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**JUDGES OF THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT,
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA, JACKSONVILLE DIVISION,
TRAVEL TO SWEAR IN 291 NEW UNITED STATES CITIZENS**

Beginning in March, 2020, safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 caused the Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse to limit the number of people coming into the Courthouse. Monthly naturalization oath ceremonies presided over by District and Magistrate Judges of the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, Jacksonville Division were postponed. However, as restrictions relating to the spread of COVID-19 eased, the Court found a way to resume judicial ceremonies.

In accordance with the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over a period of two weeks, federal judges traveled to the USCIS Jacksonville Field Office to preside over approximately 30 abbreviated open-air ceremonies. Judges administered the oath of citizenship to small groups of applicants at each ceremony (as opposed to a typical 50 person ceremony), with the presiding judge, USCIS personnel, and applicants keeping social distance from each other. The federal judges swore in 291 applicants who had completed all the requirements for citizenship except for taking the oath of citizenship.

The smaller, abbreviated, but still special, ceremonies made it possible for the judges to improvise and accommodate special requirements while maintaining the safety of those participating in the ceremonies. For example, while social distancing and other safety guidelines prevented the family and guests of the new citizens from attending the ceremonies, U.S. Magistrate Judge James R. Klindt agreed to preside over a private ceremony for a husband and wife whose 3 children were waiting in their car, but who wanted to witness their Mom and Dad become United States citizens. Judge Klindt even swore in an applicant as she sat in her car. Judge Klindt recognized the importance of their requests and found a way to accommodate them within CDC safety guidelines.

“Being sworn in as a United States citizen after meeting all the requirements for citizenship is an important, meaningful, and special occasion for these new citizens,” says U.S. District Judge Timothy J. Corrigan. “These ceremonies are also meaningful occasions for the judges of the Jacksonville Division who recognize the

effort and hard work required to become United States citizens. During this difficult time for our nation it was inspiring to see the innovation and cooperation that made these abbreviated ceremonies possible.”

Judges participating in these ceremonies were:

The Honorable Timothy J. Corrigan, United States District Judge
The Honorable Marcia Morales Howard, United States District Judge
The Honorable Brian J. Davis, United States District Judge
The Honorable James R. Klindt, United States Magistrate Judge
The Honorable Joel B. Toomey, United States Magistrate Judge
The Honorable Patricia D. Barksdale, United States Magistrate Judge

Photographs of the ceremonies presided over by Jacksonville Division Judges are attached to this email and captioned together as:

“United States District Judges Timothy J. Corrigan, Marcia Morales Howard and Brian J. Davis, along with United States Magistrate Judges James R. Klindt, Joel B. Toomey and Patricia D. Barksdale travel to the USCIS Field Office in Jacksonville to preside over naturalization oath ceremonies and swear in 291 new United States citizens.”

Photographs courtesy of Edward Fernandez, Executive Video & Photographic Services, Inc.

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