

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**41<sup>st</sup> Annual Naturalization Ceremony at Seattle Center**  
**July 4, 2026**

**Sen. Cantwell Congratulatory Remarks**

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** We have 252 new US citizens who are going to cheer on the United States on Monday. I know Belgium will let you have a break. It's such an honor to be here today in the naturalization ceremony, and to do it on our nation's 250th anniversary. Each year, we come here to celebrate, to strengthen the United States of America by strengthening our immigration.

I want to thank Alma, Maria, Chelsea, the Seattle Center, the Spirit of We the People, and Josephine for another wonderful, wonderful celebration. 250 is not just an anniversary; it's a milestone. It's an opportunity to reflect on the past and create a sense of purpose for the future.

250 years ago today, our Founding Fathers declared independence and constructed a vision for a new nation based on ideas and reason. Every step of the way, immigrants shared our values, upheld our constitutional rights, and forged new laws protecting those civil rights.

So today, as part of that celebration, we are here to remember those words of the Declaration of Independence: that all men are created equal. And throughout our nation's history, we have often found ourselves struggling with the meaning of those words.

Less than a century after that Declaration of Independence, we found ourselves in a Civil War. More than 2 million Americans would fight to end slavery and approximately 500,000 immigrants would serve in the Union Army to save our Union.

President Lincoln would take notice of those contributions at the height of the war and urged Congress [for], quote, "The expediency of establishing a system of immigration" for the United States of America, because President Lincoln viewed immigration not as a burden but as essential to our nation's future, and he called immigrants, quote, "A source of national wealth and strength."

Congress answered this call by passing the first piece of federal legislation to encourage – not to discourage, but to encourage – immigration in the United States, an act to encourage immigration, signed into law by President Lincoln on this symbolic day, July 4, 1864.

So, today, 250 years [since the Declaration of Independence], we must continue the role. We must recognize that immigrants have been there at our founding and our preservation. American exceptionalism is that we are a melting pot, and that melting pot makes us stronger.

I am confident that each and every one of you who took the oath today will join us in this fight. Seattle has long [had] the strength of diversity. We have one of the most diverse zip codes in the nation, 98118 in Rainier Valley, where over 59 languages are spoken.

So now, today, we must preserve our Constitution. We are asking you to leave this ceremony and go register to vote. We are asking you to be mindful of what preserves those constitutional rights. Trust me: we not only want you to register, but we want you to vote.

And if you have to stick it in a ballot box instead of [counting on] the Postmaster General, do it, because I guarantee you, we are going to uphold the Constitution of America, and you, our newest citizens, are helping us celebrate 250 years.

You took the test. You know what it's about. Let's go put it in[to] action. Thank you.