Oath Of Citizenship Should Not Be Changed

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It doesn't happen often, so mark the calendar. The bureaucracy has actually bowed to the wishes of the American people.
Somebody or bodies in the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) planned to celebrate Constitution Day on September 17 by changing the oath of citizenship which new citizens take when they are naturalized. The plan was to make it immediately effective, using it at an immigrant swearing-in ceremony and publishing it in the Federal Register on the same day.

Fortunately, this covert mischief was discovered in time and denounced by the American Legion, former Attorney General Edwin Meese, and Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN). The bureaucrats got the message and announced they are going back to the drawing board.

I hope that's not just face-saving language. The BCIS has a big job to do in keeping terrorists and hatemongers from other cultures out of our country, and they shouldn't be spending any time at the drawing board trying to rewrite the oath of citizenship.

The BCIS spokesman said his agency wanted the oath to be less arcane and more meaningful. That argument is nonsense because the agency's proposed rewrite is less meaningful than the present oath.

There is nothing the matter with the current oath, and there was no public demand to change it. It is really outrageous that the nameless bureaucrats tried to make this change without authorization from Congress and without allowing any public comment.

Those who become naturalized Americans are required to take this oath: "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen." The redundancy ("absolutely and entirely," "renounce and abjure," "subject or citizen") is clear, emphatic, and essential.

The BCIS revision would substitute: "I hereby renounce under oath all allegiance to any foreign state." That's simply not good enough.

Osama Bin Laden is not a "foreign state," but he does come within the definition of "foreign prince, potentate or sovereignty," and his minions are his subjects, not his citizens. Did BCIS think it is no longer important for naturalized citizens to renounce loyalty to the likes of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda?

The current oath of citizenship further states: "I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law." The BCIS revision is not satisfactory.

It omits the familiar American expression "bear arms" and instead gives the naturalized citizen the option of defending the United States "either by military, noncombatant, or civilian service." No wonder the American Legion objected.

The BCIS revision requires new citizens to perform this service only "where and if lawfully required." Are there occasions when such service is unlawfully required?

The BCIS should not be trusted to produce any substitute revisions. The bureaucrats should be cut off at the pass by congressional passage of Senator Alexander's proposed legislation to make the current oath of allegiance the law of the land, along with the American Flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem, and our national motto.

Our current oath of citizenship is a superb statement of what loyalty to America means: both swearing allegiance to the United States and renouncing all allegiance to wherever and whoever the new American came from. New citizens who swear the current oath, "so help me God," absolutely cannot retain any loyalty to their former country or ruler.

Rather than rewriting the current oath of citizenship, the BCIS ought to be busy revoking the citizenship of those who violate their solemn oath.

The Mexican government has been openly telling Mexicans who have become naturalized Americans that they can also retain theircitizenship and loyalty to Mexico. The U.S. oath of citizenship makes that a moral and legal impossibility.

Yet, on March 20, 1998, Mexico passed a law that purports to reinstate Mexican nationality for Mexican-Americans who have become naturalized U.S. citizens. Mexico has since issued tens of thousands of documents to naturalized Americans who came from Mexico.

On July 9 a naturalized American, Andres Bermudez, was elected mayor of Jerez, a city in Mexico, declaring himself a "candidate of two nations." Our government should revoke Bermudez's U.S. citizenship, as well as the citizenship of all other naturalized Americans who ran for public office in Mexico or voted in Mexico's elections.

If we tolerate duplicity with the solemn oath of citizenship, we are opening the door for more mischief in the future. Dual loyalty is an insurmountable barrier to assimilating naturalized citizens into the American culture.

America welcomes immigrants -- but only if they want to become loyal Americans, respect our Constitution and the rule of law, learn our language, and honor their oath of citizenship