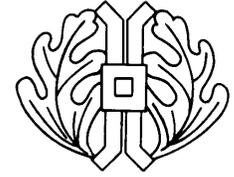


PREVENTIVE LAW SERIES

Immigration: Naturalization



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WHAT DOES NATURALIZATION MEAN?

Naturalization is simply the process of an immigrant becoming a U.S. citizen. Once achieved, the new citizen is entitled to all the rights and benefits of full American citizenship.

AM I ELIGIBLE TO BECOME A U.S. CITIZEN?

There are a number of ways that an Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) can qualify to become a U.S. citizen. You may be eligible if:

1. You have been an LPR for five (5) years;
2. You have been an LPR for three (3) years, have been married to a U.S. citizen for those three (3) years AND continue to be married to that U.S. citizen;
3. You are the LPR child of U.S. citizen parents; OR
4. You have qualifying service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

In addition, an applicant must satisfy a number of other criteria to successfully obtain citizenship. For example, an applicant must show that they have been a person of Good Moral Character. They must also be able to read, write and speak the English language AND demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the history and form of government of the United States. Finally, the applicant will be interviewed by an INS officer and required to take an Oath of Allegiance to the United States.

Since immigration law, regulations and forms can be confusing, always consult an attorney or the INS for help in deciding whether you are eligible.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR CITIZENSHIP?

There are a lot of INS forms and most of them can be complicated. **Always consult an attorney or immigration specialist for advice about what and where to file.** The following is a very basic explanation of the citizenship application process:

1. You must file an Application for Naturalization (INS form N-400) and the correct accompanying documentation. For the N-400, this includes a copy of your alien registration receipt card, INS standard photographs, and fingerprints. The approximate time for N-400 approval is about 36 months from the date of filing (depending on which part of the country you reside). After filing the N-400 along with the correct INS fee and an additional fee for fingerprinting (\$25), the applicant will be notified of when and where they are to submit to fingerprinting. In addition, the INS may make requests for additional information. They may also request the originals of any documents that you have provided. Finally, the applicant will be notified of a date and time for their citizenship interview. It is at that time that the applicant will take the U.S. history and government test and be examined on their English language capabilities. If approved the applicant will be assigned a time to take the Oath of Allegiance and officially become a U.S. Citizen.

WHAT IF I AM IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY?

For those applicants who are, or were, in the U.S. Armed Forces, the INS gives you certain breaks from the usual rules. For example, you must only be an LPR for three years instead of the usual five before you are eligible to apply for naturalization. If you are or were in the U.S. military, consult your attorney, INS or an immigration specialist to determine whether you are eligible. There are a number of qualifying factors too extensive to list here that may qualify you for citizenship.

Also, military members, be careful when filing your N-400. You **must** file a completed form G-325B (Biographic Information Sheet) along with your application. For those members who are filing based on their qualifying military service, you **must** also submit a Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service (INS form N-426).

WHERE DO I FILE MY CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION (Form N-400)?

You must always file your INS documents at the correct INS Service Center (they are located in California, Texas, Nebraska and Vermont)!!! ***If you aren't absolutely positive, always check with the INS, your attorney or the INS website before mailing any forms to INS!!!***

For California residents seeking naturalization, completed N-400 forms (and accompanying documents) should be sent to:

USINS California Service Center
Attention N-400 Unit
P.O. Box 10400
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-0400
(949) 360-2769

LEGAL ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENTS:

For an appointment to see a legal assistance attorney, please contact the Legal Assistance Office, located in Building 610, Naval Air Station North Island, by telephone at (619) 545-6278.

RESOURCES:

Immigration and Naturalization Service (General Correspondence Only)
California Service Center
P.O. Box 30111
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-0111

www.ins.usdoj.gov (for information or to download/print INS forms)
1 (800) 870-3676 (to order free INS forms by mail. Forms will be sent to your home.)