



**TEACHING, INTERPRETING,  
& CHANGING LAW** SINCE **1979**



# THE RIGHTS OF LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

APRIL 2025

## PERMANENT RESIDENTS HAVE MANY RIGHTS AND BENEFITS.

- ✓ Permission to live and work in the United States
- ✓ Eligibility for certain public benefits
- ✓ Right to travel within the United States and abroad

Your green card is proof of your status. If you lose it or it expires, you are still a permanent resident. Permanent Residence is a **status**—only an immigration judge can take away your permanent residence. Permanent residents should carry their green card (or at a minimum a copy of it).

## TRAVEL | PERMANENT RESIDENTS CAN TRAVEL FREELY, BUT REMEMBER:

- ✓ It is always safest to travel outside of the United States for less than six months at a time. Generally, permanent residents are allowed to visit but not live in another country. Speak with a lawyer if you need to relocate abroad or be out of the country for more than six months.
- ✓ If you have a criminal record, especially since becoming a permanent resident, consult an attorney before leaving the United States.
- ✓ Travel only with a valid green card.
- ✓ Upon return to the United States, do not sign a Form I-407 giving up your permanent residence, even if an immigration agent pressures you. Ask to speak with an attorney and see a judge.

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## CRIMES | PERMANENT RESIDENTS CAN LOSE THEIR STATUS IF CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES:

Only **an immigration judge** can make this decision. An immigration officer cannot deport you if you ask to speak with a judge. If you have been convicted of a crime, especially since becoming a permanent resident, ask an immigration attorney about how it might impact your status. **You may be eligible:**

- ✓ for a waiver of that crime or some legal defense in immigration court and/or
- ✓ to apply to have your criminal record cleaned up so it won't impact your status.

Even if marijuana is legal in the state where you live, it is still a federal crime to possess it. Never discuss any conduct involving marijuana with an immigration agent, unless an attorney advises you to do so. To find general immigration assistance in your area, visit the *Immigration Advocates Network's* online directory via <https://ilrc.me/gethelp>

## CITIZENSHIP | ONLY CITIZENSHIP CAN COMPLETELY PROTECT YOU AGAINST DEPORTATION:

You can apply for citizenship after five years as a permanent resident (or three years if you are married to a U.S. citizen). Find a legal service provider near you by visiting the *New Americans Campaign* via <https://www.newamericanscampaign.org>.

A waiver of the naturalization application fee is available for people who are low-income or receive public benefits. Depending on your age and number of years as a permanent resident, you may qualify for a waiver of the English requirement. People with certain disabilities may be eligible for a waiver of the English and/or civics requirements.

Are you a California Community College (CCC) or a California State University (CSU) student? If so, you qualify for <b>FREE</b> immigration legal services!			Discover more community explainers, toolkits, & alerts about immigration law.				
<b>FIND OUT MORE</b>	<b>CCC:</b> <a href="https://findyourally.com">findyourally.com</a>	<b>CSU:</b> <a href="https://findyourally.com/csu">findyourally.com/csu</a>	<b>FOLLOW US</b>				