

## REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN THROUGH “NATURALIZATION”

*To qualify for naturalization, you must:*

1. Be at least 18 years old.
2. Be a lawful permanent resident (have a “green card”) for five years.  
*If you are married to a U.S. citizen, you may need to be a lawful permanent resident for only three years.*
3. Have good moral character.  
*This means not having certain problems with the police or other authorities. Look at the “Red Flag Problem Situations” information on the back of this flyer.*
4. Be able to speak, read and write English at a basic level.  
*There are exceptions for older people. You do not have to know English if when you apply for naturalization:*
  - *You are 55 years or older and have had a green card for 15 years, or*
  - *You are 50 years or older and have had a green card for 20 years.*
  - *If you have a mental or physical disability that can make you unable to learn English or pass the U.S. history and civics exam, you can apply for a waiver*
7. Be able to pass a test on U.S. history and government. Note: If you have a mental or physical disability that can make you unable to learn English or pass the U.S. history and civics exam, you can apply for a waiver.
5. Not have left the U.S. for long periods of time in the last five years (or three if applying as the spouse of a United States citizen).  
*Look at the “Red Flags Problem Situations” information on the back of this flyer.*
6. Swear that you are loyal to the United States.

### **\*\*\* WARNING: Applying for Naturalization Might Hurt You!! \*\*\***

*If you apply for naturalization and you have certain problems, you could be denied. You could even lose your green card and be deported! Carefully read the back of this flyer. If you checked one of the boxes, see a naturalization expert before you apply.*

*Prepared by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center – February 2020*

## **RED FLAG PROBLEM SITUATIONS**

**IF ANY OF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE ABOUT YOU, YOU MUST SEE AN EXPERT IN IMMIGRATION LAW BEFORE APPLYING FOR NATURALIZATION. BE HONEST AND TRY TO REMEMBER IF YOU HAD ANY PROBLEMS IN THE PAST.** These things don't necessarily mean you can't apply for naturalization, but you should talk to an expert before you apply so you'll know whether you have a problem, and how you can best explain the problem to the Immigration Service.

*Check the appropriate box if you have had any of the following problems:*

- You made trips out of the U.S. for more than six (6) months.
- You moved to another country since getting your green card
- You are in deportation or removal proceedings - or - have you ever been deported
- You have helped or provided support (including financial) to a group that attacked others or attempted to overthrow another country's government
- You ever failed to file federal, state or local taxes or you owe taxes
- You haven't supported your children or you owe child support
- You are male and did not register for the Selective Service between the ages of 18 and 26
- You are on probation or parole for a criminal conviction
- You have contradictory information on your application
- You lied or committed fraud to get your green card or you weren't originally eligible for your green card when you got it.
- Left the country for 30 days or more while you were receiving public benefits.
- You have been arrested or convicted of a crime or you have committed a crime
- You lied or committed fraud to receive or to continue to receive public benefits
- You helped someone enter the U.S. illegally, even if it was a relative
- You ever claimed to be a U.S. citizen but weren't
- You have been charged with committing domestic violence, child abuse, or child neglect
- You have voted illegally in the U.S. or registered to vote in the U.S. and weren't eligible to.
- You have made a living by illegal gambling
- You have been involved in prostitution
- You have been a habitual drunkard, a drug abuser or a drug addict

**IF YOU CHECKED ANY OF THE ABOVE BOXES,  
YOU MUST CONSULT WITH AN IMMIGRATION EXPERT!**

*Warning on marijuana: Even though marijuana is legal in some states, immigrants can face severe penalties -- including denial of naturalization -- if they admit that they ever used it or worked in the marijuana industry.*

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