

Your Rights and Responsibilities

What you do now as a permanent resident can affect your ability to become a U.S. citizen later. The process of becoming a U.S. citizen is called “naturalization.”

As a permanent resident, you have the right to:

- Live and work permanently anywhere in the U.S.
- Apply to become a U.S. citizen once you are eligible.
- Request visas for your husband or wife and unmarried children to live in the U.S.
- Get Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicare benefits, if you are eligible.
- Own property in the U.S.
- Apply for a driver’s license in your state or territory.
- Leave and return to the U.S. under certain conditions.
- Attend public school and college.
- Join certain branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Purchase or own a firearm, as long as there are no state or local restrictions saying you can’t.

As a permanent resident, it is your responsibility to:

- Obey all federal, state, and local laws.
- Pay federal, state, and local income taxes.
- Register with the Selective Service (U.S. Armed Forces), if you are a male between ages 18 and 26. See page 11 for instructions.
- Maintain your immigration status.
- Carry proof of your permanent resident status at all times.
- Change your address online or provide it in writing to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 10 days of each time you move. See page 12 for instructions.

Permanent residents are issued a valid Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551) as proof of their legal status in the United States. Some people call this a “Green Card.” If you are a permanent resident who is 18 years or older, you must carry proof of your immigration status. You must show it to an immigration officer if asked for it. Your card is valid for 10 years and must be renewed before it expires. You should file Form I-90 to replace or renew your Permanent Resident Card. You can get this form at <http://www.uscis.gov> or by calling the USCIS Forms Line. There is a fee to file Form I-90. Your Permanent Resident Card shows that you are allowed to live and work in the United States. You also can use your Permanent Resident Card to re-enter the United States. If you are outside the U.S. for more than 12 months, you will need to show additional documentation to re-enter the U.S. as a permanent resident. See page 10 for more information on the documents required to re-enter the U.S. if you are out of the country for more than 12 months.

Maintaining Your Permanent Resident Status

There are some things you must do to maintain your permanent resident status. These are also important to remember if you plan to apply for U.S. citizenship in the future.

- Don’t leave the United States for an extended period of time or move to another country to live there permanently.
- File federal, state, and, if applicable, local income tax returns.
- Register with the Selective Service, if you are a male between the ages of 18 and 26.
- Give your new address to DHS.

Keep Your Immigration Status

Permanent residents who leave the United States for extended periods, or who cannot show their intent to live permanently in the U.S., may lose their permanent resident status. Many immigrants believe they can live abroad as long as they return to the U.S. at least once a year. This is incorrect. If you think you will be out of the U.S. for more than 12 months, you should apply for a re-entry permit before leaving the country. You should file Form I-131, Application for a Travel Document. You can get this form at <http://www.uscis.gov> or by calling the USCIS Forms Line at 1-800-870-3676. You must pay a fee to file Form I-131.

A re-entry permit is valid for up to two years. You may show the re-entry permit, instead of a visa or your Permanent Resident Card, at a port of entry. Having a re-entry permit does not guarantee that you will be admitted to the United

States when you return, but it can make it easier to show that you are returning from a temporary visit abroad. Visit <http://www.state.gov> or your nearest Department of State Consular Office overseas for more information.

File Tax Returns

As a permanent resident, you must file income tax returns and report your income to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and your state, city, or local tax department, if required. If you do not file income tax returns while living outside of the U.S. for any length of time, or if you say that you are a “non-immigrant” on your tax returns, the U.S. government may decide that you have given up your permanent resident status.

Register With the Selective Service

If you are a man and you are 18 to 26 years old, you must register with the Selective Service. When you register, you tell the government that you are available to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. The United States does not have a military draft now. This means that permanent residents and citizens do not have to serve in the Armed Forces unless they want to. You can register at a United States post office or on the Internet. To register for Selective Service on the Internet, visit the Selective Service website: <http://www.sss.gov>. To speak with someone from the Selective Service, call 847-688-6888. This is not a free call. You can also find information on the USCIS website <http://www.uscis.gov>.

Give Your New Address to DHS

Every time you move, you need to tell DHS your new address. You must file Form AR-11, Alien’s Change of Address Card. You must file this form within 10 days of your move. There is no fee to file this form. You may change your address online via an electronic AR-11 form at <http://www.uscis.gov>. Change of address online also accepts address changes for most pending cases. For more information, call USCIS at 1-800-375-5283 or visit <http://www.uscis.gov>.