Naturalization â€“ Step by Step Process

by Kevin Kallis

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The legal process where a foreign national voluntarily becomes a US citizen is called Naturalization. Not all qualify for American Citizenship. There are a series of requirements that the applicant has to fulfill before applying. Once eligible, you have to complete an application, get fingerprinted, attend an interview, take an English and a civics test. Once you have successfully completed all these steps, you will be invited to take the Oath and finally, you become a US citizen. If you are applying for naturalization based on serving in the US Armed Forces, you need not pay the filing fee.

Eligibility

Per the USCIS, Naturalization applicants must be:

At least eighteen years old.

A lawful permanent resident (green card holder) of the US (5 years or 3 years accordingly)

Physically present in the US for at least five years at the time of application.

Of good moral character.

Continuously resided in the US for a particular time.

If you meet the above said requirements, you may qualify for naturalization.

Completing Your Application

Complete Form N-400, Application for Naturalization.

Collect the necessary documents.

Mail your application, supporting documents and fee to the appropriate Service Center.

You have to send the following with your N-400 application:

A photocopy of both sides of your Permanent Resident Card.

Two identical color photographs, with your name and A-number written on the back of each photo. Make sure you do not wear eyeglasses or earrings for the photo.

A check or money order for the submission fee and the biometric services fee. (if you are 75 years of age or older, you need not pay the biometrics fee). You have to write your A-number on the back of the check or money order.

Getting Fingerprinted

You will

get an appointment letter from the USCIS.

go to the fingerprint location.

get fingerprinted.

Send additional documents if USCIS requests.

Being Interviewed and Tested

You will:

get an appointment for your interview.

go to the location mentioned in the USCIS letter at the specified time.

bring identity cards.

answer questions about the information in your application and your background.

take an English and civics test.

Get a decision from the USCIS

Taking the Oath of Allegiance

If you have successfully completed the above mentioned steps, you can take the oath of allegiance. You will:

get a ceremony date.

go to the ceremony.

return your Permanent Resident Card.

Inform the officers about what you have been doing since your interview.

take the oath of allegiance.

You become a citizen as soon as you take the Oath of Allegiance to the US. In some places, you can take the Oath on the very same day as your interview. If you do not have that option, or if you want the Oath ceremony at a later date, USCIS will keep you informed of the ceremony date with a â€œNotice of Naturalization Oath Ceremonyâ€• (Form N-445).

If you case is rejected, you may reapply. In such a case, you have to complete and resubmit a new Form N-400. Also note that you have to pay the fee again. You will also have to get fingerprinted and photographs taken again. If your application is denied, the USCIS will send you a letter that will have the date you may reapply for citizenship. If your case is rejected because you failed the English or civics test, you can reapply as soon as you want. You can reapply when you believe you have

learned enough English or civics to pass both the tests.

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Kevin Kallis - About Author:

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