



# Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Lawful Permanent Resident

As a lawful permanent resident (LPR), you are expected to respect and be loyal to the United States and to obey our country's laws. Being an LPR also means that you have new rights and responsibilities.

Being an LPR is a “privilege” and not a “right.” The U.S. government can take away your LPR status under certain conditions. You must maintain your LPR status if you want to live and work in the United States and become a U.S. citizen one day. In this section, you will learn what it means to be an LPR and how you can maintain your LPR status.

## Your Rights and Responsibilities

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

As an LPR, 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 a visa 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 an LPR, 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 LPR status at all times.
- Give your new address in writing to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within 10 days of each time you move. See page 12 for instructions.



## Maintaining Your LPR Status

There are some things you must do to maintain your LPR 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 and state 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

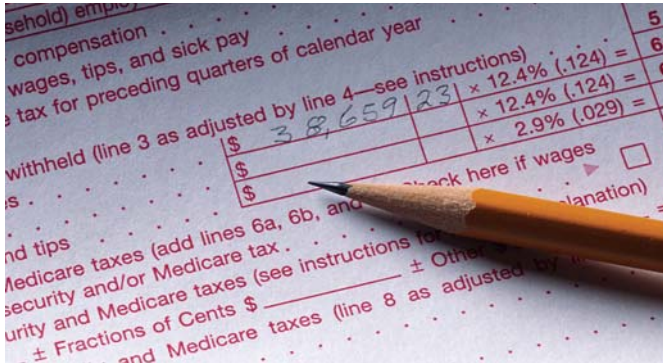
LPRs who leave the United States for extended periods, or who cannot show their intent to live permanently in the U.S., may lose their LPR status. If you think you will be out of the U.S. for a long period of time (more than 6 months), before leaving the country you should:

1. File Form I-131, Application for a Travel Document, to apply for a re-entry permit. A re-entry permit is valid for up to 2 years and is proof that you are returning from a temporary visit abroad. You may show the re-entry permit at a port of entry instead of a returning resident visa or a Permanent Resident Card.
2. File Form N-470, Application to Preserve Residence for Naturalization Purposes. Form N-470 lets you keep your residence status for naturalization purposes under certain circumstances.

Copies of these forms are on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov>. You must pay a fee to file Form I-131 and Form N-470.

### File Tax Returns

As an LPR, you must file income tax returns and report your income to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and your state tax department, if required by your state. 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 say that you have given up your permanent residence 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. LPRs and citizens are not asked 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 1-847-688-6888. 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. There is no fee to file this form. You must file this form within 10 days of your move.

Send Form AR-11 to:

Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Change of Address  
P.O. Box 7134  
London, KY 40742-7134

For more information, call the USCIS at 1-800-375-5283 or visit <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/ar-11.htm>.

## If You Are a Conditional Resident

You may be in the U.S. as a conditional resident (CR). You are a CR if you were married for less than 2 years to your U.S. citizen or LPR spouse on the day your permanent residence status was granted. If you have children, they also may be CRs. Some immigrant investors are also conditional residents.

A CR has the same rights and responsibilities as an LPR. Conditional residents must file either Form I-751, Petition to Remove the Conditions on Residence, or Form I-829, Petition by Entrepreneur to Remove Conditions, within 2 years of the date they were granted conditional LPR status. This date is usually the expiration date of your Permanent Resident Card. You may file these forms as soon as 90 days before the 2-year anniversary of when you got your conditional LPR status. If you do not do this, you can lose your immigration status.

### Filing Form I-751 With Your Husband or Wife

If you are a CR and you are married, then you and your spouse must file Form I-751 together so that you can remove the conditions on your LPR status.

Sometimes, you do not have to file Form I-751 with your husband or wife. If you are no longer married to your spouse, or if your spouse has abused you, you can file Form I-751 by yourself. If you are not applying with your spouse, you can file Form I-751 at any time after you are a CR.

## HOW TO FILE USCIS FORMS I-751 AND I-829

### I-751, Petition to

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**Who:** Conditional residents

**Why:** Conditional resident status expires 2 years after the date you become a CR.

**When:** Conditional residents filing together with their spouse must file Form I-751. Immigrant Investors must file Form I-829. Both of these forms must be filed within the 90 days before conditional residence status expires. The expiration date is normally on your Permanent Resident Card.

**Where to get the form:** You can call the USCIS forms request line at 1-800-870-3676. You also can get the form at <http://www.uscis.gov>.

**Where to send the form:** Send it to a USCIS Service Center. The addresses of the Service Centers are in the instructions for the form.

**What it costs:** You must pay a fee. These fees can change, so check with USCIS for the current fees before you send the form.

If you file Form I-751 or Form I-829 on time, USCIS will usually send you a notice extending your CR status for up to 12 months. During this time, USCIS will review your application.

### I-829, Petition by

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► **TIP: Keep Copies of All Forms**

Keep copies of all forms you send to USCIS and other government offices. When sending documents, do not send originals. Send copies. Sometimes forms get lost. Keeping copies can help avoid problems.



## Finding Legal Assistance

If you need help with an immigration issue, you can use the services of a licensed and competent immigration lawyer. You can check with your local bar association for help finding a qualified lawyer.

If you need legal help on an immigration issue, but do not have enough money to hire a lawyer, there are some low-cost or free assistance options. You can ask for help from:

- **A Recognized Organization.** These are organizations that are recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). For an organization to be “recognized,” it must have enough knowledge and experience to provide services to immigrants, and can charge or accept only very small fees for those services. For a list of these BIA-recognized organizations, see <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/statspub/recognitionaccreditationroster.pdf>.
- **An Accredited Representative.** These are people who are connected to BIA “recognized organizations.”



These representatives can charge or accept only very small fees for their services. For a list of these BIA-accredited representatives, see <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/statspub/accreditedreproster.pdf>.

- **A Qualified Representative.** These are people who will provide free services. These representatives must know about immigration law and the rules of practice in court. Examples of qualified representatives include law school students and graduates and people with good moral character who have a personal or professional affiliation with you (relative, neighbor, clergy, co-worker, friend).

- **Free Legal Providers.** The Office of the Chief Immigration Judge has a list of recognized free legal service providers for people who are in immigration proceedings (see <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/probono/states.htm>). This is a list of attorneys and organizations that may be willing to represent immigrants in proceedings before the Immigration Courts. The attorneys and organizations on this list have agreed to help immigrants pro bono (free of charge) only in immigration proceedings, so some of them may not be able to help you with non-court-related matters (that is, visa petitions, naturalization, etc.).

## IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE



If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you can find help through the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224 (for hearing impaired). Help is available in Spanish and other languages.

The Violence Against Women Act allows abused spouses and children of U.S. citizens and LPRs to “self-petition,” or file their own petition to become a lawful permanent resident. See <http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/battered.htm> or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline for more information.

- **Pro Bono Program.**

Local lists of recognized *pro bono* (free of charge) organizations and their representatives are usually available at each local USCIS office.



**Beware of Immigration Consultant Fraud!**

Many immigration practitioners are well qualified and honest and can provide good services to immigrants. However, there are some people who take advantage of immigrants.

Before you decide to get help with immigration matters, and before you pay any money, you should do some research so you can make the right decision about what kind of legal help you need. Protect yourself from becoming a victim of immigration fraud.

Here are some things to remember:

- No one has a special connection with USCIS. Ask questions of people who make promises that sound too good to be true or who claim to have a special relationship with USCIS. Do not trust people who guarantee results or faster processing. If you are not eligible for an immigration benefit, using an immigration lawyer or consultant will not change that.
- Some consultants, travel agencies, real estate offices, and people called “notary publics” offer immigration services. Be sure to ask questions about their qualifications and ask to see copies of their BIA accreditation letter or bar certificate. Some people who say they are qualified to offer legal services are not. These people can make mistakes that cause serious problems for you.
- If you use an immigration consultant or lawyer, get a written contract. The contract should be in English, and in your own language, if English is not your native language. The contract should list all services that will be provided to you and how much they cost. Ask for references before you sign the contract.

Try to avoid paying cash for services. Make sure you get a receipt for your payment. Be sure to keep your original documents.

- Never sign a blank form or application. Make sure you understand what you are signing.

Get help if an immigration consultant has cheated you. Call your state or local district attorney, consumer affairs department, or local police department.



## Consequences of Criminal Behavior for LPRs

The United States is a law-abiding society. LPRs in the United States must obey all laws. If you are an LPR and engage in or are convicted of a crime in the U.S., you could have serious problems. You could be removed from the country, not allowed back into the U.S. if you leave the country, and, in certain circumstances, lose your eligibility for U.S. citizenship. Examples of crimes that may affect your LPR status include:

- A crime defined as an “aggravated felony,” which includes crimes of violence that are felonies with a 1-year prison term.
- Murder.
- Terrorist activities.
- Rape.
- Sexual assault on a child.
- Trafficking in drugs, firearms, or people.

- A crime of “moral turpitude,” which in general is a crime with an intent to steal or defraud; a crime where physical harm is done or threatened; a crime where serious physical harm is caused by reckless behavior; or a crime of sexual misconduct.

There are also serious consequences for you as an LPR if you:

- Lie to get immigration benefits for yourself or someone else.
- Say you are a U.S. citizen if you are not.
- Vote in a federal election or in a local election open only to U.S. citizens.
- Are a “habitual drunkard”—someone who is drunk or someone who uses illegal drugs most of the time.
- Are married to more than 1 person at the same time.
- Fail to support your family or to pay child or spousal support as ordered.

- Are arrested for assault or harassing a family member (commit domestic violence), including violating a protection order.
- Lie to get public benefits.
- Fail to file tax returns when required.
- Willfully fail to register for the Selective Service if you are a male between the ages of 18 and 26.



If you have committed or been convicted of a crime, before you apply for another immigration benefit you should consult with a reputable immigration lawyer or a community-based

organization that provides legal service to immigrants. See p. 14 for information on how to find legal assistance.