

# UNDERSTANDING THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS

Becoming a U.S. citizen is a years-long journey that requires legal status, consistency, scrutiny, and perseverance. This is the process our immigrant neighbors navigate before they take the Oath of Allegiance.



## 1. BEFORE APPLYING

### Gain lawful permanent residency

- Several paths lead to lawful permanent residency (becoming a green card holder)
- Must be a lawful permanent resident for multiple years

### Meet the requirements

- Be 18 years or older
- Hold lawful permanent resident status for the required number of years
- Maintain continuous residence in the U.S.
- Demonstrate “good moral character,” ie: paying taxes, avoiding criminal offenses



## 3. BACKGROUND CHECKS AND INTERVIEWS

### Attend biometrics screening

- Fingerprints, photographs, and signatures are collected and sent to the FBI

### Pass the naturalization interview

- During the interview, applicants must show they can read, write, and speak English proficiently
- A USCIS officer reviews all of the information in the application in detail
- Applicants must pass a civics test on U.S. history and government



## 5. BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN

### Take the Oath of Allegiance

- Citizenship is official after taking the Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony
- The green card is surrendered
- A Certificate of Naturalization is issued
- The individual becomes a U.S. citizen, with the right to vote, obtain a U.S. passport, and sponsor immediate family members



## 2. THE CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION

### Provide a detailed life record

- Complete Form N-400
- Include every address, job, and international trip accurately
- Avoid errors or inconsistencies that can cause delays, denials, or deeper scrutiny

### Pay fees

- As of 2024, the standard fee is over \$700
- Limited waivers exist for low-income applicants

### Wait for the next step

- Once submitted, the waiting period lasts 9–15 months or more



## 4. THE DECISION

### Receive a decision by USCIS

- **Approved:** Applicant can proceed to naturalization
- **Continued:** More evidence is required
- **Denied:** Eligibility requirements are not met

*Note: Denials can be appealed, requiring additional time, paperwork, and legal actions.*

### Why does naturalization matter?

Citizenship is the common thread between all Americans. The naturalization process is intentionally demanding. Understanding this journey helps explain why citizenship carries such deep meaning for those who earn it.

**Learn more about the rights and responsibilities all citizens should honor.**

