



# THE RIGHTS OF LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

March 2017

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## Permanent residents continue to have all the same rights:

- permission to live and work in the United States
- eligibility for certain public benefits
- right to travel within the United States and abroad

Your green card is proof of your status. If you lose it or it expires, you are still a permanent resident. Permanent Residence is a status – only an immigration judge can take away your permanent residence.

Do not sign anything to give up your status without seeing a judge.

### ➤ **TRAVEL: Permanent residents can travel freely, but remember:**

- ✓ It is always safest to travel outside of the United States for less than 6 months at a time. Generally, permanent residents are allowed to visit but not live in another country. Speak with a lawyer if you need to relocate abroad or be out of the country for more than 6 months.
- ✓ If you have a criminal record, especially since becoming a permanent resident, consult an attorney before leaving the United States.
- ✓ Travel with a valid green card.
- ✓ Upon return to the United States, do not sign a Form I-407 giving up your permanent residence, even if an immigration agent pressures you. Ask to speak with an attorney and see a judge.

### ➤ **CRIMES: Permanent residents can lose their status if convicted of certain crimes.**

Only an immigration judge can make this decision. An immigration officer cannot deport you if you ask to speak with a judge.

If you have been convicted of a crime, especially since becoming a permanent resident, ask an immigration attorney about how it might impact your status. You may be eligible:

- (1) for a waiver of that crime or some legal defense in immigration court and/or
- (2) to apply to have your criminal record cleaned up so it won't impact your status.

Even if marijuana is legal in the state where you live- it is still a federal crime to possess it. Never discuss any conduct involving marijuana with an immigration agent, unless an attorney advises you to do so.

### ➤ **CITIZENSHIP: Only citizenship can completely protect you against deportation!**

You can apply for citizenship after five years as a permanent resident (or three years if you are married to a U.S. citizen). Find a legal service provider near you: <http://newamericascampaign.org/>

A waiver of the naturalization application fee is available for people who are low-income or receive public benefits. Depending on your age and number of years as a permanent resident, you may qualify for a waiver of the English requirement. People with certain disabilities may be eligible for a waiver of the English and/or civics requirements.