

From Green Card to citizenship

YOUR RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND NEXT STEPS



You've worked hard to build a life in North Carolina, and **our community is stronger because of people like you.**

As a green card holder, you have rights that protect you – but **citizenship gives you even more security.** This guide will help you maintain your status, avoid risking your lawful permanent resident status, and take the next step toward securing your future in the U.S.

As a Green Card Holder...



...you have the right to:

- ✓ Live permanently anywhere in the U.S.
- ✓ Work for most U.S. employers
- ✓ Own property and open bank accounts
- ✓ Attend public schools and universities
- ✓ Apply for a driver's license
- ✓ Receive Social Security and Medicare (if eligible)
- ✓ Apply for U.S. citizenship after 5 years (or 3 years if married to a U.S. citizen)
- ✓ Sponsor certain family members for green cards
- ✓ Travel internationally and return to the U.S. (with conditions)



...you have the responsibility to:

- ⚠ Make the U.S. your permanent home
- ⚠ Follow all federal, state, and local laws
- ⚠ Pay U.S. taxes on your income, even from abroad
- ⚠ Register with the Selective Service if you are a male between 18-25
- ⚠ Carry proof of your status at all times
- ⚠ Notify USCIS within 10 days if you change your address
- ⚠ If traveling abroad for 6+ months, apply for a re-entry permit (Form I-131) before leaving



...you could lose your status or be denied citizenship if:

- ✗ You commit a felony or drug-related offense
- ✗ You stay outside the U.S. for 1+ year without a re-entry permit
- ✗ You claim to be a nonresident on tax forms
- ✗ You unlawfully vote in U.S. elections
- ✗ You fail to pay U.S. taxes

Take the next step to citizenship!



Mark your calendar for eligibility!

COMPLETE THIS WORKSHEET AND TRACK THE PROCESS

My green card was issued on _____
(issue date – when you got your green card)

My green card will expire on _____
(typically 10 years after issue date)

I should file Form I-90 to renew my green card by _____
(6 months before expiration date)

I will be eligible to apply for citizenship on

(if married to a U.S. citizen → 3 years after issue date; if not married to a U.S. citizen → 5 years after issue date)

Take the next step: Become a U.S. citizen for more security and freedom

If you've had your green card for 5 years (3 years if married to a U.S. citizen), you may be eligible for naturalization.

With a green card, your status can still be affected by travel, legal issues, or policy changes. Citizenship eliminates these risks and grants you:

- The right to vote in elections
- Protection from deportation
- Freedom to travel without time limits or risk of losing your status
- Access to all the benefits and opportunities of U.S. citizens

Take action and stay informed

- **Know someone with a green card?** Share this guide with them so they can protect their rights and stay informed.
- **Would this be helpful in another language?** Let us know. Email us at contact@ncaatinaction.org.
- **Stay connected with NCAAT in Action.** Sign up for our newsletter to learn more about how we're building power in North Carolina's Asian American community. Go to www.ncaatinaction.org to learn more.

Need Help? Contact an Immigration Attorney

If you have legal issues, questions about travel, or need guidance on citizenship, talk to a qualified immigration attorney listed on ncaatinaction.org/lawyers or visit USCIS.gov.

DISCLAIMER: This resource was drafted with guidance from NCAAT in Action's immigration legal team to provide general information for green card holders. However, nothing in this document is formal legal advice. If you have questions about your specific situation, contact a qualified immigration attorney.