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Immigration Magazine

Advantages of U.S. Citizenship, Becoming a U.S. Citizen and New Naturalization Test

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A. **New Naturalization Test**

Beginning October 1, 2009, all U.S. citizenship applicants must take the new naturalization test, regardless of when they filed for their Form N-400 Applications for Naturalization. Since October 1, 2008, the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** has a **new naturalization test for applicants of the N-400 Applications for Naturalization to become U.S. citizens**. However, up until October 1, 2009, U.S. citizenship applicants who had filed for their Form N-400 Applications for Naturalization before October 1, 2008, had a choice of taking the old naturalization test or the new naturalization test.

The new naturalization test (see www.uscis.gov/citizenship) emphasizes on the fundamental concepts of American democracy, basic U.S. history, and the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. **As of September 30, 2009, the USCIS estimated that it has a 91% overall pass rate for the new naturalization test.**

Some U.S. citizen applicants may be exempted or may apply for waiver from the U.S. naturalization test, depending on the criteria.

B. **Criteria for Applying for U.S. Citizenship**

The criteria for applying for U.S. citizenship vary from case to case. In general, a **green card holder or permanent resident** who has been **continuously residing for at least half of the 5 years in the U.S. since receiving green card status may apply for U.S. citizenship or naturalization, depending on the criteria**. However, a **green card holder or permanent resident who is married to a U.S. citizen spouse for three years, and who has been continuously residing for at least half of the 3 years in the U.S. since receiving green card status, may apply for U.S. citizenship or naturalization, depending on the criteria**.

In addition, under certain circumstances, **children born to U.S. citizen parent(s)**

abroad may apply for U.S. passport, depending on the criteria.

C. **Advantages of Being a U.S. Citizen**

The advantages of being a U.S. citizen are bountiful such as the opportunities to apply for a U.S. passport; or to sponsor his/her spouse, children (of all ages), parents, and siblings for green card status. Under current U.S. immigration law, U.S. green card holders or permanent residents have limited options when it comes to family immigration sponsorship for their relatives.

For example, at present, the U.S. immigration law does not afford a green card holder or lawful permanent resident the opportunity to file for a family sponsorship for his/her parent.

Furthermore, some U.S. green card holders or permanent residents, even for those who grew up in the U.S. and knew U.S. as their only home, may unwittingly lose their green card status through abandonment or other legal mechanisms, thereby leading to deportation from the U.S.

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