



Fact Sheet

Oct. 26, 2010

USCIS Redesigns Naturalization Certificate to Enhance Security

More than 600,000 new citizens will receive the enhanced certificate over the next year

Introduction

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced it has begun issuing a redesigned, more secure Certificate of Naturalization (Form N-550) as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the integrity of the immigration system. The agency anticipates that over 600,000 new citizens will receive the enhanced certificate over the next year.

Certificate & Process Features



- Automated production process
- Embedded digitized photo and signature
- Background featuring color-shifting ink
- Certificates printed utilizing tamper-resistant technology
- A standardized size of 8 ½ by 11 inches

In addition to enhancing security, the redesigned certificate provides newly naturalized citizens a higher-quality certificate, which will now be easier to showcase in a standard 8 ½ by 11 inch frame.

Improvements to Note

- The new method of producing certificates will rely on a printing process that is more tamper and fraud resistant than the previous printing methods.
- The redesigned certificate will have the latest physical security features making it less susceptible to fraud.
- The redesigned certificate will feature up-to-date text consistent with the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
- The new method of producing certificates is less labor intensive, less prone to human error and more secure.

-USCIS-



Questions and Answers

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Questions and Answers

Q1. What is a Certificate of Naturalization (Form N-550)?

A1. The Certificate of Naturalization serves as evidence of your citizenship. You receive it after taking the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. Citizenship qualifies you to vote and travel with a U.S. passport, among other rights. In many instances, a Certificate of Naturalization is accepted as a valid form of identification.

Q2. Why did USCIS redesign the naturalization certificate?

A2. The previous Certificates of Naturalization featured hard-copy photos of the candidates. The redesigned certificate features the naturalization candidate's digitized photo and signature embedded into the base document. Eliminating the requirement to affix the hard-copy photo and hand-stamp the USCIS director's signature cuts cost in man-hours and improves security.

Q3. What's different about the new certificates?

A3. The naturalization candidate's digitized photo and signature are embedded in the security-enhanced certificate. Its background features a color-shifting ink pattern that is difficult to recreate. Additionally, USCIS will use a more secure printing process, making it more tamper-proof.

Q4. When will USCIS issue the security-enhanced naturalization certificates?

A4. USCIS will begin using redesigned certificates at all offices beginning today. USCIS offices in Atlanta, Denver and Baltimore will begin to utilize the automated production process this week, including digitizing photos and signatures on all certificates. USCIS will deploy the automated production system agency-wide by the end of the calendar year.

Q5. Following the agency-wide transition to the new document, will all new citizens receive redesigned naturalization certificates with digitized photos?

A5. While all new citizens will receive the redesigned, security-enhanced certificate, certain, limited categories of naturalization candidates, including overseas military and homebound candidates, will receive documents with hard-copy photos affixed to their certificates.

Q6. I've already obtained a Certificate of Naturalization. Will I have to apply for the redesigned security-enhanced version?

A6. No. All previously issued Certificates of Naturalization will remain valid.

Q7. How does the issuance of the redesigned naturalization certificate impact applicants?

A7. The issuance of the redesigned Certificate of Naturalization will not impact Application for Naturalization (N-400) processing times. USCIS Application Support Centers (ASCs) will still require applicants to submit their fingerprints and two hard-copy photos. The ASCs will also capture a digital photograph and digital signature for each N-400 applicant.

Q8. If ASCs will capture digital photos of N-400 applicants, why must applicants still provide hard-copy photos?

A8. The hard-copy photos will be required as a back-up in case of unforeseen issues, allowing them to continue their naturalization process without delay.

Q9. Will USCIS update any of its other certificates?

A9. Yes. USCIS intends to digitize its other citizenship-related certificates, but no completion dates have been set.

Q10. Will the wording of the naturalization certificate change?

A10. Yes. USCIS has revised the wording to better reflect the current provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In particular, obsolete language stating that the candidate resides in the United States and “intends to reside in the United States when so required by the Naturalization laws of the United States” has been removed. These changes affect the form of the certificate only and do not alter any legal requirements for naturalization or USCIS application processing.

Q11. What does the redesigned Certificate of Naturalization look like?

A11. This is a sample version of the redesigned Certificate of Naturalization.



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