

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO U.S. IMMIGRANT VISA HOLDERS**

*Please read this information sheet carefully. If you then have further questions, please contact this office before leaving for the U.S.*

**YOUR IMMIGRANT VISA FOIL IS IN YOUR PASSPORT. IT IS VALID FOR ONE ENTRY FOR ADMISSION TO THE UNITED STATES, WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE DATE OF ISSUE. THE DATE OF EXPIRY IS PRINTED ON THE VISA. NOTE: THE VISA IS ONLY VALID IF ACCOMPANIED BY THE SEALED VISA PACKAGE ENVELOPE, WHICH CONTAINS YOUR FILE. DO NOT OPEN THE VISA PACKAGE ENVELOPE - IT MUST BE PRESENTED, UNOPENED, TO THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER, Customs and Border Protection, AT THE U. S. PORT OF ENTRY. DO NOT PACK these items in your baggage - be sure to carry them with you on to the airplane when traveling.**

**Please note that we DO NOT keep copies of the documents you submitted as part of your immigrant visa application, so you should safeguard all original documents in case you need them in the future. If your visa is lost, stolen, or damaged, or if you are unable to use it before the expiry date, please contact us immediately.**

Your visa will be inspected & stamped by an officer of the Department of Homeland Security Customs & Border Protection Officer (CBP) at the first port of entry to the United States. The endorsement stamp will be placed next to your immigrant visa foil in your passport to indicate you have been admitted for permanent residence. **This stamp then automatically extends your visa foil for ONE year, and is temporary evidence of your legal status until you receive, your 'Permanent Resident Card' (Form I-551) which is commonly called the "Green Card".** The I-551 card will be mailed to you within 3 months of your admission to the U.S. and will be your identification and proof of legal status while in the United States.

Although we recommend that you do not leave the United States until the Alien Registration Card has been received, if the need arises, you may use the **endorsed visa foil** in your passport in place of the I-551 card, as evidence of your residency, if presented within **one year** of your first date of admission. However, once you have received your "green card" you must present it at the time you apply for re-admission. [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)

### **ABSENCES FROM THE U.S.:**

In order to maintain your U.S. residency status, you must return to the U.S. after a temporary absence abroad of LESS than ONE year. Your Alien Registration Card and your

valid passport should be presented at a U.S. Port of Entry when you apply for re-admission. You must be able to show the Immigration officer at that time, that you are **RETURNING TO AN UNABANDONED RESIDENCE AFTER A TEMPORARY VISIT ABROAD**. It is NOT possible to extend the one-year absence, once you have departed the U.S.

**\*\* NOTE: WHEN YOU LEAVE THE U.S. IN THE FUTURE, ALWAYS RETAIN THE COPY OF YOUR AIRLINE DEPARTURE TICKET/BOARDING PASS, SO THAT ON RE-ADMISSION TO THE U.S. YOU CAN PROVE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN OUTSIDE THE U.S. LESS THAN ONE YEAR, AS THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT STAMP PASSPORTS TO INDICATE DEPARTURE, AND NEW ZEALAND DOES NOT STAMP PASSPORTS TO INDICATE ARRIVAL OF N.Z. CITIZENS.**

You should keep a photocopy of your Alien Registration Card Number (an 8 digit number commencing with "A") separately, in the event of theft or loss. **Do not leave** the United States without your Alien Registration Card. If the card is lost or stolen while in the U.S. report it immediately to USCIS and obtain temporary evidence of your permanent resident status, until you receive your replacement card. Apply for replaced Alien Registration Card using Form I-90.

Download Form I-90 at <http://www.uscis.gov> - click on FORMS and scroll down to I-90

### **WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES:**

- **WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES** : on line at <http://www.welcometousa.gov/>
- **DISCOVER AMERICA** link: <http://www.discoveramerica.com>
- **ALSO:** " **Welcome to the United States**" Publication: M-618 available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) - CLICK on "Education and Resources" in top margin; then click on: **Resources for New Immigrants** in left margin. Scroll down to Publication M-618 link.

**MAINTAINING YOUR LEGAL RESIDENT STATUS IN THE U.S.:** Alien residents who spend extended periods abroad cannot expect to maintain their residence simply by travelling annually to the U.S. A Customs and Border Protection (CBP/DHS) officer at the port of entry may determine at some point that an alien returning to the U.S. holding an alien registration card has abandoned his or her U.S. residence, even if he or she has travelled regularly to the U.S. The immigration inspector has sole responsibility for determining an alien's eligibility for admission to the U.S. as a resident or returning resident.

- *Please see the following website for more information on retaining your U.S. LPR status:* <http://www.uscis.gov/> - Search "HOW DO I" for further links

**RE-ENTRY PERMIT:** In the event that circumstances may required you to remain abroad for **MORE THAN ONE YEAR**, you may apply for a Re-Entry Permit from the Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) in the United States. You **MUST** apply for the Re-Entry Permit **BEFORE**

**LEAVING** THE United States. Applications are NOT ACCEPTED from outside the United States. The Re-Entry Permit is valid for a maximum period of two years, and cannot be extended beyond that period.

- *Form I-131: Application for Travel Document/Re-entry Permit is available at:*  
<http://www.uscis.gov/> : click on FORMS and scroll down to **I-131**

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please be aware that you MUST keep the USCIS advised of your change of address by completing USCIS Form **AR11**.

- *Instructions on change of address requirements on following website:*  
[http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/G3\\_021507.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/G3_021507.pdf)

**U. S. CITIZENSHIP by NATURALIZATION:** Information on becoming a U S citizen & Form N-400, is available on the following website: <http://www.uscis.gov/naturalization>

We suggest you keep this information sheet for future reference. If you have queries about your resident status once you have arrived in the U .S., please contact the USCIS office which covers your place of residence in the US.

- <http://www.uscis.gov> & CLICK on "contact us" at bottom of page

*You may also find additional useful information at:*

- U.S.A. government information website: <http://www.usa.gov/>
- Social Security Administration : [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
- U S Tax information - Internal Revenue Service: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)