

Spotlight: Immigration

Volume 1, Issue 1

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Inside Issue 1

- We hope you enjoy this new publication!
- Learn surprising, important facts about the process of applying for U.S. Citizenship. Each issue of *Spotlight: Immigration* will have an article about another aspect of immigration law.
- Our “By the Way” section will give you quick updates on issues that did not need a full article. This month, we mention DACA renewals, taxes, and the departure of one of our staff attorneys.

Welcome to our Newsletter!

Legal Services for Immigrants welcomes you to *Spotlight: Immigration*, a newsletter for immigrants and their allies across southeastern Wisconsin. Each issue will explain important aspects of immigration law and policy, and keep you up to date on changes in this fast-evolving field. We will also share our office news, including staff transitions and new outreach projects. But who are we, anyway?

Catholic Charities Milwaukee’s Legal Services for Immigrants office has been serving the immigrant community of southeastern Wisconsin since 2000. Our attorneys represent low-income immigrants in a wide range

of humanitarian and family-based cases, providing high-quality legal work at affordable rates. We also act as an educational resource for immigrants and their allies in the ten counties of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

You may have seen one of our attorneys at your local church or community center, discussing scams, DACA, or taxes. Maybe you’ve read our Anti-Fraud Newsletter, which is being replaced by this publication.

We consider our newsletters a vital link between our office, and your com-



Our office on Milwaukee’s South Side.

munities. If you have comments, questions, or specific areas of interest you would like to see addressed, please contact Outreach Coordinator Elizabeth Pierson at epierson@ccmke.org, or (414) 643 8570 x. 4420.

Please enjoy this first issue of *Spotlight: Immigration*.

Apply for Citizenship: It’s Not So Scary

So you want to become a United States citizen... but it sounds complicated. Maybe you don’t feel confident in your English, or you’re nervous about the civics test. Maybe you don’t have the money for

the application fee. You might be surprised to learn that not everyone has to take an English test, or a civics test. And depending on your income, you may not have to pay the application fee.

If you would like to become a citizen, turn the page to learn important, little-known facts about the application process.

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The information presented in this newsletter should not be considered legal advice. Please remember that immigration laws and regulations can change at any time. If you have a question about immigration law, you should speak with an attorney. To schedule an intake appointment at Catholic Charities, please call (414) 643 8570 x. 4418.

By the Way...

1. Do you currently have a work permit under the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals** program? Remember to *renew* that work permit, and your DACA status, four to five months (120-150 days) before they expire.
2. Did you file your state and federal **income taxes** on time? If you missed the April 15 deadline, you should still file *as soon as possible*. If you owe taxes, you will reduce your penalty by filing now. If you are eligible for a refund, you can still get it.
3. LSI staff attorney **Kathryn Finley** is leaving Catholic Charities for a wonderful new job opportunity in Washington, D.C. During her two years with LSI, Kate has represented hundreds of clients in their successful applications, shared vital information with hundreds more through community outreach, and kept our office running smoothly in many other ways. Kate's coworkers and clients will all miss her, but we know she is going on to do great things. Look for an introduction to Kate's replacement in the next issue of *Spotlight: Immigration*.

Become a U.S. Citizen: It's Easier Than You Think

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The English Requirement

People who meet the following age and resident requirements do not have to take the English test, and can take the civics test in the language of their choice:

1. Over 50 years old, and you have lived in the U.S. as a Lawful Permanent Resident (green-card-holder) for at least 20 years total.
2. Over 55, and you have lived in the U.S. as a Lawful Permanent Resident for at least 15 years total.



If you are over 65, and you have lived in the U.S. as a Lawful Permanent Resident for 20 years or more, you do not have to take the English test. You do have to take the civics test in the language of your choice, but you will be given a simplified version.

The Civics Requirement

To become a citizen, most people have to pass a test on U.S. government and history, or "civics." The immigration officer will ask you ten questions from a list of 100 questions, which you can find online: <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test>. But not everybody has to take the civics test!

If you have a physical or mental disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, for more than 12 months, you *may be* exempt from the civics and/or English requirement. You will need a doctor to fill out Form N-648, Medical Certification for Disability Exemptions. The

doctor will have to examine you and give a medical opinion that says you are unable to take the test.

The Fee

Money should never be the reason you do not apply for citizenship! The fee is normally \$680, but you do *not* have to pay the fee for your naturalization application if:

1. Your household earns at or below 150% of the federal poverty level; or
2. You or your children receive state benefits like Badgercare, FoodShare, or SSI; or
3. You have another financial hardship that you can prove.

If you meet these requirements, you will need to fill out Form I-912, Request for a Fee Waiver, attach documentation of your financial situation, and submit it to immigration with your citizenship application.