

Naturalization and the Selective Service

In general, all men ages 18 to 25 present in the U.S. (regardless of citizenship or immigration status) are required to register for the U.S. Selective Service. Men who are in the U.S. in valid nonimmigrant status (i.e. on a student or visitor's visa) while age 18 to 25 are not required to register. Registering for the Selective Service does not mean that you will automatically be called to serve in the military.

Naturalization applicants are supposed to show good moral character for the five years before their application is filed (or three years, if applying based on marriage to a U.S. citizen). USCIS (formerly called INS) says that men who were required to register for the Selective Service but “knowingly and willfully” did not register during the five (or three) years before applying to naturalize can't show good moral character. Many people don't know about the requirement to register for the Selective Service, and therefore don't register. **If you are applying to naturalize, please review the following about the Selective Service requirement:**

If you are a man but were not in the U.S. while age 18 to 25, or if you are a woman: you do not need to worry about this requirement.

If you are a man now over age 25 and registered for the Selective Service between the ages of 18 and 25: You can go to the Selective Service web site (www.sss.gov), enter your name, Social Security number, and birth date, and make a print out showing that you registered. Or you can call (847) 688-6888 or (847) 688-2576 to get proof that you registered. You should submit this with your naturalization application.

If you are a man now age 18 to 25 present in the U.S. and thinking about applying to naturalize: You should make sure you have registered for the Selective Service and show proof that you registered when you submit your naturalization application. See the Selective Service contact information above. **NOTE: if your beliefs prevent you from serving in the military, you still need to register for the Selective Service, but if you are called to serve in the military, you can explain why your beliefs prevent you from serving.**

If you are a man and were in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 25 but did not register for the Selective Service, see what you should do if thinking about naturalizing based on which of the following three categories applies to you:

- If you are now under age 31 (or 29, if applying based on marriage to a U.S. citizen) and you didn't register because you didn't know about the requirement: you can probably still apply to naturalize, but you should submit a statement saying that you didn't know about the requirement and your failure to register for the Selective Service was not knowing and willful. You should try to register now but probably won't be able to.
- If you are now under age 31 (or 29, if applying based on marriage to a U.S. citizen) and you didn't register even though you knew about the requirement: you should get legal assistance before applying.

- If you are over age 31 (or 29, if applying based on marriage to a U.S. citizen): you can probably still apply to naturalize without explaining why you didn't register, as long as you didn't do anything in the past five (or three if applying based on marriage to a U.S. citizen) years that affects your good moral character (such as a crime, not paying child support, etc.).

This material provides general information only and is current only as of the date it is written. To receive information on how this material may apply to a specific situation, you may wish to consult an immigration attorney or accredited representative. Northwest Immigrant Rights Project can provide naturalization information and legal assistance to persons of low income. For more information, call Kristen Kussmann at (206) 587 4009, or (800) 445 5771.

Naturalization and Selective Service 9/03