



**Embassy of the United States of America
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana**

**Ask the Consul Installment One Hundred Forty-Two:
Immigrant Visa Fee**

Beginning February 1, 2013, the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) will begin collecting a \$165 fee from applicants once they have been issued Immigrant Visas.

Q: When must I pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee?

You should pay the fee prior to departing for the United States. USCIS implemented this fee to recover costs associated with processing, filing, maintaining the Immigrant Visa package, and processing the I-551 “green card.” If you travel to the United States without paying the new fee, you will not be issued an I-551 “green card” documenting your legal permanent resident status in the United States.

Q: Who has to pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee?

Applicants issued immigrant visas (including Diversity Visas). Only children adopted under the Orphan visa category (IR-3/IR-4), Returning Residents (visa category SB-1), and individuals who are issued fiancé/e visas (visa category K) will be exempt.

If you cannot pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee, another person, such as your petitioner, sponsor, relative, or friend can make this payment on your behalf. You will need to provide them with your Alien Number and Case ID.

Q: Why do I need an I-551 (green card)?

USCIS issues green cards to permanent residents to present as proof that they are authorized to live and work in the United States. If you are a permanent resident

age 18 or older, you are required to have a valid green card in your possession at all times. Current green cards are valid for 10 years, or two years in the case of a conditional resident, and must be renewed before the card expires.

A green card can be used to prove employment eligibility in the United States when completing the Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification. It can also be used to apply for a Social Security Card and a state issued driver's license. A green card is valid for readmission to the United States after a trip abroad of less than one year. If your trip will last longer than one year, a reentry permit is needed.

Q: What if I was issued an immigrant visa before February 1, 2013? Do I have to pay the fee?

No. Only applicants issued visas on or after February 1, 2013, are required to pay the new fee. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the airport or land border will review immigration records to determine when your immigrant visa was issued. If the visa was issued on or after February 1, 2013, but the fee was not paid, the Immigrant Visa package will be collected at the point of entry, but USCIS will not issue a green card until the \$165.00 fee is paid.

Q: How do I pay the new fee?

The payment can be made at www.USCIS.gov/immigrantfee. Payments may be made directly from a U.S. bank account or using a credit card or debit card.

After clicking on the link follow these steps to submit payment online:

1. Fill in all fields completely and accurately. If an item is not applicable type "N/A."
2. Click on *Make Payment*.
3. Enter your payment information and click on *Continue with Payment*.
4. Double check that the information presented is correct.
5. Enter your e-mail address to receive confirmation of the transaction.
6. Check the Authorization Box and click on *Submit Payment*.
7. Keep a copy of your receipt for your records.

Q: I just got my green card and friends have told me that I should keep it in a safe place at home instead of carrying it around with me in my wallet. Is this correct? Or do I have to carry my green card with me everywhere I go?

If you are 18 or older, you must carry your green card with you. Section 264(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (I.N.A.) requires all lawful permanent residents (LPRs) to have “at all times” official evidence of LPR status.

Failing to have your green card with you is a misdemeanor, and if you are found guilty you can be fined up to \$100 and put in jail for up to 30 days. (I.N.A. Section 264(e).)

“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/ask-the-consul.html>. Information about visas and travel can be viewed at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov>, <http://travel.state.gov>, and at <http://www.dhs.gov>. Applicants are strongly encouraged to prepare their own documents and avoid “visa advisors/brokers”.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.