



August 22, 2025

PM-602-0189

Policy Memorandum

SUBJECT: Resumption of Personal Investigations of Aliens Applying for Naturalization (INA 335(a))

Purpose

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is resuming personal investigations of aliens applying for naturalization in accordance with section 335(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

Authority

- [INA 316](#) – Requirements of naturalization
- [INA 335](#) – Investigation of applicants; examination of applications
- [8 CFR 335](#) – Examination on application for naturalization

Background

United States citizenship confers rights, privileges, and responsibilities that are vital to the security and safety of the United States. INA 335(a) directs USCIS to conduct investigations of aliens applying for naturalization unless waived by the Secretary of Homeland Security. These personal investigations, also known as neighborhood investigations, cover the vicinity of an alien's place of residence and employment and include at least the 5-year period¹ prior to the filing of the alien's naturalization application. The purpose of the INA 335(a) investigation is to corroborate an alien's eligibility for naturalization, which includes scrutiny of an alien's residency, good moral character, attachment to the U.S. Constitution, and disposition to the good order and happiness of the United States.² USCIS may waive the requirement at its discretion for individual cases or classes of cases.³

Currently, USCIS generally waives the requirements for neighborhood investigations and has relied largely on biometric checks and criminal history checks performed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to obtain information related to the applicant's good moral character and eligibility for naturalization. From 1802 to 1981, petitioners for naturalization were required to present two witnesses who could testify to their qualifications for citizenship. In 1981, Congress eliminated the requirement for witnesses, a change justified in part by the fact that a petitioner's character could be

¹ See [INA 335\(a\)](#). See [8 CFR 335.1](#).

² See [INA 316](#).

³ See [INA 335\(a\)](#).

better determined by an investigation, including a neighborhood investigation, if necessary.⁴ However, by 1991, the former Immigration and Naturalization Service had essentially stopped conducting neighborhood investigations.⁵

Guidance

USCIS is exercising its statutory authority in INA 335(a) and will immediately end the general waiver of neighborhood investigations to fully ensure that aliens applying for naturalization meet statutory requirements, including, but not limited to, full attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States.⁶ USCIS will make the decision to conduct or waive neighborhood investigations on an individualized discretionary basis after reviewing relevant evidence contained in the records before USCIS.

USCIS may request information from the alien seeking naturalization to inform its decision on conducting the neighborhood investigation such as testimonial letters from neighbors, employers, co-workers, and business associates who know the alien and can provide substantiated information about the alien, including any of the requirements for naturalization. If such evidence is not contained in the alien's application for naturalization, USCIS may request that the alien submit such evidence. Submitting such evidence proactively with the Application for Naturalization can assist USCIS in determining whether a waiver of a neighborhood investigation is appropriate in a particular case without a need to issue a Request for Evidence.

USCIS will review and weigh the evidence submitted as well as all evidence before USCIS in a manner that is consistent with general adjudicative practices and make an individualized discretionary decision on conducting a neighborhood investigation. An alien's failure or refusal to provide such evidence may lead to a neighborhood investigation which may impact the alien's ability to establish their eligibility for naturalization.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented by the [USCIS Policy Manual](#) accordingly.

Use

This policy memorandum is intended solely for the guidance of USCIS personnel in the performance of their official duties, but it does not remove their discretion in making adjudicatory decisions. It may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable under law or by any individual or other party in removal proceedings, in litigation with the United States, or in any other form or manner.

⁴ See H.R. Rep. No. 97-264, at 31 (1981). See Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1981, Pub. L. 97-116, 95 Stat. 1611 (December 29, 1981). See [8 U.S.C. 1445](#).

⁵ See Department of Justice, Office of Inspector General, Special Report on *An Investigation of the INS's Citizenship USA Initiative, Chapter III. Interviews and Adjudications*, Report No. OIG-01-16 (July 1, 2000) available at <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/special/0007/intervus.pdf> (last visited Aug. 11, 2025).

⁶ See [INA 316\(a\)](#).