



## **IMMIGRANT VISAS**

### **Instructions for Immigrant Visa Applicants**

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**These instructions apply only when you have been instructed to prepare for a visa interview by either: a) the National Visa Center (NVC), or b) the Consular Section.**

a) If your case is with the NVC, depending on NVC instructions, you must either upload documents electronically in [your account](#), or submit photocopies of your documents to NVC. **Do NOT send original documents to the NVC!** The original documents, except for your passport, will be sent to the Consular Section by mail ONLY after you have received your interview date. You will need your passport for your medical examination.

Once the NVC schedules your interview date, two (2) weeks prior to your interview date you must mail **all original documents to the Consular Section** by express courier (do not use DHL\* services at this step).

**Notice: Failure to provide any of the required documents to the Consular Section will result in lengthy delays in the processing of your visa after we have received all the required documents.**

**Reminder:** Civil documents issued more than one year ago are considered expired. If your civil documents were issued over a year ago, bring updated original copies of civil documents and/or financial evidence such as tax returns that may have changed or been superseded since you originally submitted them to the NVC or Consular Section for review.

b) If this checklist was sent to you by the Consular Section, or if you have an appointment date from NVC, you must upload any missing documents electronically in [your CEAC account](#), and then send by express courier (do not use DHL\*) to the Consular Section ORIGINAL documents along with this checklist. For cases that submitted electronic documents to NVC, you are not required to submit an affidavit of support and taxes, unless specifically requested by the Consular Section. Do not send your passport, as you will need it for your medical examination.

\* Note: You are not authorized to use DHL services *before* your appointment date.

### **Required Documents For Each Immigrant Visa Applicant:**

**This instruction package:**

Mark with (X) the appropriate box for each document that you will submit.

**Form DS-260 For Beneficiary:**

Complete electronic [form DS-260](#) and obtain the required documents listed below. Please do not leave any questions blank on the application forms. Questions that do not apply to the applicant's particular situation should be answered with "Does Not Apply." Include all names and last names used, including your maiden names, if applicable. Answer YES to the question on Vaccinations. Include a current Albanian phone number and an e-mail address for both the beneficiary and the petitioner so that we can reach you with any further notices regarding your case. Answer all Security and Background questions that apply in your case. If you do not have your Invoice ID, you must [contact the NVC](#) to request it.

**Petitioner's Affidavit of Support (for each petition filed):**

- An Affidavit of Support, [Form I-864](#) for every petition filed. Regardless of whether the petitioner does or does not qualify to file, he or she must file form I-864.

- If the petitioner is married, his or her spouse must also complete and submit a [Form I-864A](#), (note: this form is different from Form I-864), accompanied by a photocopy of either his or her U.S. passport, naturalization certificate, or legal permanent resident card.
- A photocopy of the petitioner's U.S. passport, naturalization certificate, or legal permanent resident card.
- Pay stubs for the last six weeks.
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [tax return transcript](#). Note: Form 1040 is NOT accepted.
- W-2s for most recent tax year for all jobs held.
- If you did not file taxes in the last year, you must also prepare a signed statement explaining why you were not required to file taxes.
- The birth certificate of petitioner and marriage certificate (if applicable). Birth and marriage certificates issued by the Albanian authorities must have been issued within one year from the interview date.

For more information on preparing Affidavit of Support forms, please visit the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs web page "[Affidavit of Support Instructions](#)."

**JOINT SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT OF SUPPORT:**

- If petitioner's income does not meet the requirements of 125 percent of the [Poverty Guidelines](#), established yearly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or if you are not qualified to sponsor your relative financially, you must find a joint sponsor who can submit:
  - An Affidavit of Support, [Form I-864](#) for each petition filed.
  - If the sponsor is married, his or her spouse must also complete and submit a [Form I-864A](#), (note: this form is different from Form I-864), accompanied by a photocopy of either his or her U.S. passport, naturalization certificate, or legal permanent resident card.
  - A photocopy of sponsor's U.S. passport, naturalization certificate, or legal permanent resident card.
  - Pay stubs for the last six weeks.
  - Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [tax return transcript](#). Note: Form 1040 is NOT accepted.
  - W-2s for most recent tax year for all jobs held.

**BIRTH CERTIFICATE** *(for each visa applicant):*

One original birth certificate for each applicant. It should read Certificate of Birth, not Personal Certificate (e.g., the certificate translated in six languages for use abroad reads "Certificate of Birth – Certifikatë Lindjeje).

Applicants **not** born in Albania must obtain a translated and notarized birth certificate from the country where they were born and an Albanian birth certificate (applies to Albanian citizens only). If you were born in Greece, please read section '[Documents issued by Greek Authorities](#)' regarding specific procedures on apostille and translation.

**MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE** *(for each visa applicant, if applicable):*

Original marriage certificate showing current name and maiden name.

**DIVORCE DECREE OR DEATH CERTIFICATE:**

If previously married, please include proof of termination of that marriage whether by death or divorce (e.g., death certificate of previous spouse, translated final decree of divorce, etc.)

**JUDICIAL STATUS CERTIFICATE BY THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE:**

Each applicant, aged 16 years or older, must apply for the judicial status certificate (in Albanian - Dëshmi Penaliteti) at the Albanian Post Office. On the application form, answer "Request for a visa from U.S. Embassy Tirana (or enter the post you will have your visa interview, so that we forward it to that post)" to the question "Institution requesting the certificate". Apply in current and in any former names, including **maiden names**. You do not return to the Post office to collect your judicial status certificate. The issuing office will

send your record to the U.S. Consulate in Tirana.

In order to certify that you've applied for the Ministry of Justice certificate, please submit a copy of the receipt of payment for the criminal record, which you received from the Albanian Post Office. If you want the certificate to be forwarded to another post, please email at [TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov](mailto:TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov) once you have applied. Note: Applicants are often refused for not submitting the certificate in **all names/surnames used**.

**COURT DECISION OR DISTRICT PROSECUTION CERTIFICATE:**

- a) Persons convicted of a crime must obtain full court decisions from district courts, regardless of the visa applicant having been pardoned or granted amnesty, or the criminal conviction has been expunged.
- b) Persons currently under criminal investigation by a Prosecution office must submit a certificate from that office.

These documents must be translated into English and notarized.

**POLICE RECORDS FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY:**

A translated and notarized Police Record from a foreign country for applicants aged 16 or older, if the applicant is currently residing in that country for more than six months, or if the applicant has previously lived in that country for more than one year, in current and in any former names, including maiden names. For further information, please read the Police Certificates title of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs web page "[Reciprocity and Civil Documents by Country](#)."

**Italian Police certificates:** You must obtain 1. Certificato del Casellario Giudiziale and 2. Certificato dei Carichi Pendenti. Read more on how to obtain it in the above link.

**Greek Police certificates:** If you are or were a resident of Greece, read section '[Documents Issued by Greek Authorities](#)' for more detailed information.

Please note that applicants are often refused under INA 221(g), because of failing to submit the certificate(s) in all the names/last names they've used.

**MILITARY RECORDS:**

Albanian citizens: All **male** applicants born before September 1990, regardless of whether they have served or not in the military service, including all female applicants with prior military service must apply at the Albanian Post office for the military record.

Third country applicants: a military record is required. Please refer to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs web page "[Reciprocity and Civil Documents by Country](#)."

**OTHER CIVIL DOCUMENTS:**

1. Decisions issued by the responsible state authority regarding any name changes, age amendments, adoption and similar subjects must also be submitted.
2. Birth certificate from a foreign country (if not born in Albania), with apostille, translated and notarized. For individuals born in Greece, see '[Documents Issued by Greek Authorities](#)' for detailed information.

**DOCUMENT EXPIRATION:**

All documents must have been issued within a year prior to the interview date. Otherwise, your case will be refused until we receive updated documents.

**PHOTOS:**

Regardless of age, all U.S. Immigrant Visa applicants must present two un-retouched color photographs, approximately 5 X 5 cm in size, taken in front of a plain white or off-white background. The photo should be taken in full-face view directly facing the camera with the head centered in the frame. For more details please visit the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs web page "[Photograph Requirements](#)." If the requirements are not met, the photo will not be accepted. **Bring a new photo on the**

**interview date**, taken within the **last three months**. Applicants are often refused 221(g) due to expired photos, or photos not meeting standards.

**TRANSLATION:**

Certified English translations must accompany all third country documents not in Albanian language, or in English, except for court decisions which are required to be translated. Translations must be certified by a competent translator and sworn before a Notary Public.

**PHOTOCOPY OF PASSPORT:**

A photocopy of all applicants' passports must be provided. The beneficiary's passport must be valid for travel to the United States and must have at least one year validity beyond the issuance date of the visa. You must present your passport at the interview date. Passport must bear your most recent name (*example: recently married spouses*).

**REGISTER YOUR IMMIGRANT VISA APPOINTMENT AND DHL BRANCH:**

Each visa applicant, regardless of age, must create an account at <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-al/iv>, select "Register", and then select "I have received a Consular interview appointment date from the National Visa Center (NVC), Kentucky Consular Center (KCC), or the Consular Section and I have been instructed to register my appointment on this site". Continue selecting from the drop-down menu "I need to register an Immigrant Visa appointment". Fill out the data, and your case number\*, and then choose the DHL branch where you would like your passport returned upon completion of your case, and/or any submitted documents if requested by the Consular Officer. Select "Continue" and then "Complete Registration". Print out the "Instructions" page and send it along with all other documents to the Consular Section. No visa can be issued without a DHL registration.

\*If during your registration you receive a message: "The Immigrant Visa case number provided is not ready to schedule an appointment", please allow a few more days until your case number is loaded in the website. This usually happens because you received the appointment letter before your electronic file is sent to the Consular Section. You must try to register again in the following days, but make sure to be registered *before* your interview date.

**EVIDENCE OF RELATIONSHIP** with your U.S. citizen, or Legal Permanent Resident spouse (*for CR-1, F2A, and IR-1 petitions only*).

Evidence of relationship to petitioner, such as photographs, correspondence, or phone calls, clearly showing the petitioner and the beneficiary together; or other evidence of relationship overtime. Evidence that the petitioner visited Albania, such as ticket stubs or travel reservations.

**DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY GREEK AUTHORITIES:**

**Greek birth certificates and court records:** you must obtain the apostille, and then have it translated into English by the Translation Services of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Please visit [the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs](http://www.mfa.gr) website for more information and contact information.

**Greek Police certificates:** applicants aged 16 or older: if the applicant is currently residing in Greece for more than six months, or if the applicant has previously lived in Greece for more than one year, then he or she is required to apply for a Penal record of **Judicial use** ("Antigrafo Pinikou Mitroou Dikastikis Hrisis") from the Hellenic Ministry of Justice, Bureau of Penal Records for Foreigners (Ipiresia Pinikou Mitroou Allodapon), Mesogion 96, 101 79 Athens, Greece, tel. 210776-7300, 210776-7185, 210776-7186, & 210776-7043. You may apply in person, or through an authorized representative by completing an Authorization form ("Exousiodotisi") notarized by the Greek Embassy in Tirana.

On the Penal Record application, ensure you tick the box requesting a record for **Judicial Use** while in the last two boxes, "Reason for Issue" and "Description", please write **Request for a Visa** and **Request for a Visa from the U.S. Embassy, Athens**, respectively. You do not return to the Bureau to collect your Penal Record. The Bureau will send your record to the U.S. Consulate **in Athens**.

## Processing of Immigrant Visas

NVC will review each application upon its receipt. If the documentation is complete, NVC will schedule an appointment and notify the petitioner and the beneficiary with an appointment letter. NVC will send the appointment letter either to the petitioner, beneficiary, and/or agent of choice by either e-mail, regular mail, or express courier, depending on the method of communication elected at the time of the application.

### Before The Interview

□ **MEDICAL EXAMINATION:** Each visa applicant, regardless of age, is required to undergo medical examination by the authorized panel physicians of the U.S. Embassy. You must read the information on the [panel physicians' website](#), and fill out the medical examination form, under "Apply for an Appointment", and submit the form to one of the panel physicians **three weeks prior to your visa interview appointment date** (or immediately after you learn your visa interview date). The panel physician office will email you via the same email the medical appointment date. The applicant is responsible for the cost of the examination. A medical examination is also required for each accompanying child. You should bring the appointment letter with you on the day of the medical examination.

Do not bring the chest X-ray CD to the Embassy. Please read section "[Visa Approval - When You Receive Your Visa](#)" below regarding X-rays.

**Note: The validity of your visa will be limited to the validity of your medical report.** Medical reports classified as "Class B (TB)" are valid for 3 months from the date on which the doctor signed the report. All other medical reports classified as "No apparent disease or defect" are valid for 6 months after the date on which the doctor signed the report. If your case is subject to further administrative processing, or if the processing of your file is delayed due to missing documents, the medical report may expire before your visa is issued. In that case, you will be required to renew the medical examination and submit an updated medical report to the Consular Section before you receive your visa.

□ **VISA APPLICANTS** in: CR1, IR1, F21, C21, FX1, or CX1 visa categories must read [The Information on the Legal Rights Available to Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence in the United States and Facts about Immigrating on a Marriage-Based Visa](#). The Consul will ask you about this information. Failure to read this information may delay the processing of your visa.

□ **SECURITY INFORMATION:** The following items are not permitted in the Consular Section: cell phones, iPods, photo or video cameras, electronics such as radios, portable CD players or other equipment, including computers. Please do not bring any type of electronic equipment. Please do not bring large or bulky bags to the Consular Section, as there is no storage space for them. There is no parking available at the Embassy for visa applicants. We recommend that you don't bring any unnecessary items with you in your bag on the day of the interview as this may delay your security prescreening.

### Interview

Bring your passport with you on your interview date.

**APPLICATION FEE:** Please visit the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs web page "[Fees for Visa Services](#)" for detailed information about immigrant visa fees. If the petitioner has already paid this fee with NVC for you, then you do not need to pay again. If not, you will be required to pay the application fee at the time of your interview. The payment may be made in cash only to the consular cashier, in U.S. Dollars or Albanian Lekë.

The interview date is scheduled by NVC, and either you, the petitioner, or the agent of choice will receive the notification regarding the appointment date from the NVC. The appointment date is scheduled by the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana only in a limited number of cases.

### After the Interview

After your personal interview with the Consular Officer, provided that your file is documentarily complete and you are found qualified for the visa, your visa will be issued.

*Note:* If you haven't received your visa within 15 business days from the date when your passport has been delivered to us for visa issuance, you may contact our office at [TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov](mailto:TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov)

Some visa applications may require: a) additional documents, or b) further [administrative processing](#).

- a) When additional documents are requested, the Consular Officer will provide you with a refusal letter listing all the missing documents. Only the items that are marked off on the list apply to your case. Please note that the Consular Officer may use the Albanian language to explain the documents required by the applicant, and English language to explain the documents required by the sponsor. Therefore, you may need to send a copy of the refusal letter by fax or email to the

sponsor. It is strongly recommended that you send all the requested documents at once; otherwise, the processing of your case may take more time.

- b) Additional administrative processing takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. Applicants are advised of this requirement when they apply. Most administrative processing is resolved within 60 days of the visa interview. When administrative processing is required, the timing will vary based on the individual circumstances of each case. Before making inquiries about the status of administrative processing, applicants or their representatives will need to wait for at least 60 days from the date of the visa interview or from the date of submission of supplemental documents, whichever is the latest.

### **Most Important**

No assurance can be given in advance that a visa will be issued. A consular officer can make a decision only after reviewing the formal application and all the documents and a personal interview of the applicant.

Do not sell your house, car or property, resign from your job or make non-refundable flight or other travel arrangements until you have received your immigrant visa. This office will make every effort to expedite the process. However, should complications arise, applicants may be required to return to this office or furnish additional information.

Section 203(g) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act requires that an intending immigrant pursue his/her visa application within one year from the date he/she is informed that it is possible to do so. Failure to do so within one year from the date of the notification will result in the cancellation of your application and any of your visa petitions.

### **Visa Approval - When You Receive Your Visa**

**Passport with Visa** – Your immigrant visa will be placed on a page in your passport. Please review the printed information right away to make sure there are no errors. If there are any spelling errors, contact the Consular Section promptly via e-mail at [TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov](mailto:TiranaUSConsulate@state.gov) with detailed information regarding the error.

**Sealed Immigrant Packet** - For cases processed electronically, you will only receive your passport; for physical cases, you will receive your passport and the visa packet via DHL courier service. DHL will notify you by e-mail when you may go to their office to pick up your passport. Important: Please **do not open the brown envelope containing the visa packet**. You will also receive a sealed packet containing documents that you must present to U.S. Customs and Border Protection at a port-of-entry (often an airport) upon your arrival in the United States. You must not open the sealed packet; it must be hand-carried. **CD of X-rays** – Must be hand-carried with you, not packed in your luggage.

**USCIS Immigrant Fee** - Effective February 1, 2013, all individuals who are issued immigrant visas overseas **must pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee *prior* to traveling to the United States**. Only child(ren) is/are entering the United States under the Hague Process, returning residents, and those issued K visas are exempt from the fee. You will receive instructions on how to pay the fee once the visa is issued. If you have additional questions, [the USCIS website](#) has more details on the new fee, including contact information for USCIS. USCIS will **not** issue a Permanent Resident Card until you have paid the fee.

**When Should You Travel** - You must arrive and apply for admission in the United States no later than the visa expiration date printed on your visa; failure to do so will result in the loss of your immigrant status. An immigrant visa is usually valid for up to six months from the date of issuance unless your medical examination expires sooner, which may make your visa valid for less than six months. Do not travel outside of U.S. until you receive your Permanent Resident Card. Your visa cannot be extended beyond its expiration date, and all visa fees paid are nonrefundable. If, for any reason, you could not use your visa, you must return it to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana. For certain visa categories, another visa may be issued if you are able to prove that you did not travel to the U.S. for reasons beyond your control. You would be subject to paying new fees, and reweighing all required documents.

**Entering the United States:** When traveling to the United States, the primary (or principal) applicant must enter **before or at the same time** as family members with visas. Children, who turn 21 years old after visa issuance, must travel to the United States before they turn 21 years old; otherwise they will lose their immigrant status. With your immigrant visa (before it expires), and sealed packet, you will travel to a U.S. port-of-entry (often an airport) and request permission to enter the United States.

**Form I-551**, Legal Permanent Resident Card, also known as a Green Card, will be mailed to the address in the United States that is written in your application forms. This is a very important document, which will serve as proof that you have permission for permanent residency and gives you the opportunity to stay and

enter the USA without a visa. See paragraph "[For New Immigrants: Welcome to the United States](#)" below for more information.

**Vaccination Records** - Children are required to have certain vaccinations before they can enroll in school in the United States. Therefore, it is recommended that your child have complete vaccination records before immigrating (the vaccination sheet panel physician provided you). Learn about vaccination requirements by state on the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website under [State Vaccination Requirements](#).

### **For New Immigrants: Welcome to the United States**

For a guide concerning new immigrants to the United States, please visit the USCIS web page "[Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants](#)" and [Welcome To USA website](#).

Once your Permanent Resident Card is issued, you should not stay outside of U.S. for more than one year, otherwise you will be considered to have lost your status of Legal Permanent Resident. For more information on the rights and responsibilities of Legal Permanent Residents, please visit the USCIS website, [Maintaining Permanent Residence](#) and USCIS pamphlets "[I am a Permanent Resident. How Do I Know What My Responsibilities Are?](#)" (PDF 1.19 KB), and "[How Do I Get a Reentry Permit](#)" (PDF 1.18 KB).

Should you have any questions regarding your Permanent Resident Card, or if you did not receive your card within a certain time, please contact the [USCIS office](#) in the state of your residence in the U.S.



### **W A R N I N G**

**VISA FRAUD IS A SERIOUS OFFENSE. ATTEMPTS TO MISREPRESENT A MATERIAL FACT OR MISLEAD A CONSULAR OFFICER MAY JEOPARDIZE CURRENT AND FUTURE VISA APPLICATIONS.**

**CERTIFICATION:** I hereby certify that I have read the above instructions and that I have all the listed documents applicable to my case and that I am prepared to present them at the time of my visa appointment (*or that I have sent them via DHL along with this checklist*).

\_\_\_\_\_  
(**Signature** of Applicant, or Parent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(**Date**)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(**Name** of Applicant, or Parent)