RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS OF LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

RIGHTS:

- Permanent Residents are allowed to live and work in the United States.
- Permanent Residents can apply for certain jobs that involve security clearances and some government jobs.
- Permanent Residents are legally protected by the laws of the United States, state of residence, and local jurisdiction (the same protections under the law that apply to U.S. citizens apply to permanent residence).
- Permanent Residents may apply for government-sponsored financial aid for education (green card holders are entitled to in-state or resident tuition rates at certain colleges and universities).

RESTRICTIONS:

- According to USCIS, Permanent Residents cannot vote in U.S. federal, state, and local elections. However, certain states and cities are challenging this rule; Vermont and Maryland allow non-citizens to vote in their local elections, and San Francisco and New York have appealed court rulings against allowing non-citizens to vote locally.
- Children of Permanent Residents born outside the United States do not become Permanent Residents automatically.
- Permanent Residents cannot run for political office at the federal, state, and local levels.
- If a Permanent Resident has lived in the United States long enough, they may receive Social Security benefits.
- Permanent Residents are eligible for certain public benefits (e.g., Medical, CalFresh).
- Permanent Residents can travel outside the United States and are allowed to return.
- Permanent Residents can sponsor other family members for a green card (spouse, minor children, and unmarried adult sons and daughters).

Note: almost all restrictions go away once you naturalize!

This resource is informational only and is not intended as legal advice.