



Are you Considering Leaving the United States?

Here Are Some Things to Consider

In the current immigration enforcement environment, many people are considering all of their options, including the possibility of leaving the United States. This document provides some information you may wish to consider as you contemplate this option.

Leaving the United States can have serious and sometimes permanent immigration consequences. Before making travel arrangements, speak with a qualified immigration attorney or DOJ Accredited Representative about your situation.

Talk to a legal representative before deciding to leave the United States:

- ☐ **Understand your immigration options** – Before making a decision, you should consult with an experienced immigration attorney to determine if you qualify for asylum, a family-based status, a humanitarian benefit, or another form of immigration relief. This is because many times, leaving the US means no longer being able to pursue these options.
In preparation for a consultation, you should **compile your complete immigration history**, including:
 - When and how you entered the United States,
 - Any documents you were given,
 - Copies of prior applications,
 - Encounters with immigration officials, or
 - Records of your immigration court history.
- ☐ **Understand the possible immigration consequences of leaving the United States** – Make sure you ask your [qualified legal representative](#):
 - ☐ Whether departure will trigger a bar on reentry to US;
 - ☐ Whether you have an existing removal order or open court case;
 - ☐ What will happen to pending applications;
 - ☐ Whether and how you may be able to return legally in the future.
- ☐ **[Understand how departure will affect your Immigration Court proceedings](#)** – Leaving the United States does not close a pending Immigration Court case. Missing a hearing, even if the reason is that you have already left the country, could result in a deportation order being entered in your absence. That in turn can make it more difficult for you to return to the US in the future, and can increase criminal penalties if you attempt to return unlawfully.
- ☐ **Understand the difference between leaving on your own and “[Voluntary Departure](#)”** – “Voluntary Departure” is a specific form of immigration relief that can only be granted by an immigration judge or DHS. There are deadlines and eligibility requirements that someone must meet in order to qualify for “Voluntary Departure.” Simply buying a ticket and leaving the country is not “Voluntary Departure.”

Possible Immigration Consequences of Leaving the US

Leaving the United States can lead to negative immigration consequences. Learn what they are and whether they apply to you by speaking with a qualified immigration legal representative. Some potential consequences include:

- **Bar on reentry to the US** – Departure from the US may trigger a bar to coming back to the United States in the future, even if you have a lawful way to do so. Bars to return could last 3 years, 10 years, or even be permanent. There are complicated rules about [when the bars apply](#) as well as certain limited waivers available to overcome the bar, so you should review whether this applies to you with a qualified legal representative.
- **Existing Removal (Deportation) Orders** – If you already have a final deportation order, leaving the US will be considered self-deporting. Leaving with a deportation order carries a separate bar to returning to the US (generally for 10 years, sometimes longer), though waivers of this bar are sometimes available.
- **Travel on Advance Parole** - “Advance Parole” is a document issued by USCIS giving someone permission to leave and return to the US. Due to a recent policy change, however, having Advance Parole no longer guarantees someone the right to re-enter the US after leaving. Advance Parole holders should consult with an immigration attorney before traveling.
- **Pending Green Card Applications** – Departure may result in certain applications being denied for abandonment. For example, a pending I-485 application for permanent residence is generally considered abandoned if the applicant leaves the US without first obtaining Advance Parole.
- **Pending Asylum and Other Humanitarian Applications** – Leaving the US may affect pending applications for asylum, TPS, U visa, T visa, VAWA, parole, and other humanitarian benefits. In your absence, your application could be denied and a removal order issued. Additionally, traveling to the country where you claim to fear harm may lead immigration to believe your asylum application was fraudulent. You can read more about the consequences of leaving with a pending asylum application [here](#).
- **Future Eligibility for a Visa** – Leaving on your own terms does not guarantee that you will be able to return more easily in the future. In order to enter the U.S. lawfully you must first qualify for a visa. Your prior immigration history (including being in the US without lawful status, a deportation order, fraud or misrepresentation), criminal history, and many other factors will affect whether you will be eligible for a visa in the future.
- **Consular Processing and Waivers** – If a family or employment based petition has been filed for you, talk to an immigration attorney to confirm that you will be able to successfully navigate the process through a US consulate abroad if you leave the country. An approved petition alone does not guarantee a visa or permission to return.



Travel and Documentation

- **Risks traveling by plane** - Traveling by plane, even inside the United States, carries [risks](#) for noncitizens. The TSA (airport security) is sharing passenger information with immigration. To limit your risk, purchase a flight that will take you directly out of the United States, without any layovers inside the country.
- **Passport and permission to enter** – Confirm that you have a valid passport and permission to enter the destination country. If you are traveling through another country, determine whether a transit visa is required. If different members of your family hold different nationalities, make sure you understand in advance what documentation may be required to travel to your destination country.
- **Be informed about CBPHome**: Some people are choosing to use a government program called CBPHome to leave the country. In some cases, the government is providing assistance with plane ticket costs and a payment of \$2,600 after leaving the country. However, there are also reports of people trying to participate and not receiving assistance, as well as reports of people who left through the program but did not receive the promised payments. Participating in the program also means giving all of your information to immigration. You can read more about CBPHome [here](#).
- **Departure deadlines and proof of departure** – If an immigration judge or DHS gave you a deadline to leave the US, confirm exactly when and how you must leave. Keep copies of your boarding pass, passport stamps, travel itinerary, tickets, and other proof showing the date and manner of departure.
- **Traveling with children** – Obtain passports (including US passports for children born here) and any required consent from the other parent or legal guardian. Review existing custody orders and consider whether written travel authorization is necessary. Do not take a child outside the United States in violation of another parent's custody rights or a court order.

Family and Financial Preparedness

- **Family separation and caregiving** – Consider who will care for children, older relatives, pets, or anyone who currently depends on you. Decide whether family members will travel together or remain in the United States. Take time to learn about options for the care of children and to put in place a [family preparedness plan](#).
- **Gather important documents** – Collect original and electronic copies of immigration records, birth and marriage certificates, custody documents, medical and school records, tax returns, employment records, identification, and your attorney's contact information. Keep them in a safe place, and consider sharing a copy or the location with a person you trust.
- **Health care and medication** – Get a copy of your and your family's medical records, vaccination records, and prescriptions. Make sure you have an appropriate supply of any necessary medication. Research the availability and cost of medical care and insurance in your destination country.
- **Education and employment** – Request copies of school transcripts, diplomas, professional licenses, and employment references.
- **Property and finances** – Think about what will happen to your personal property (including vehicles and your home), and to any active leases, debts, loans, and monthly bills. Consider authorizing someone you trust to manage property, finances, mail, court matters, or other responsibilities after you leave. You can do so by signing a [Power of Attorney](#) document.

Last updated August 20, 2026



Determine what you may need to handle yourself, and what someone with Power of Attorney may be able to help with after you leave the country. Talk to your bank to understand how you may be able to continue accessing your account or how to close it.

- **Employment and taxes** – Make arrangements with your employer to ensure you are paid for all of your time. You may want to request a copy of your employment records and any information about retirement accounts. Consult a [tax professional](#) about any continuing federal or state tax obligations.