

Veteran's Benefits for Non - Citizens

Is it legal for a non-U.S. Citizen to join the United States Military?

Yes. Enlistment into any branch of the U.S. military, by citizens of countries other than the United States is limited to those foreign nationals who are legally residing in the United States and possess an Immigration and Naturalization Service Alien Registration Card (INS Form I-151/551, a "Green Card"). Applicants must be between 17 and 35; meet the mental, moral, and physical standards for enlistment; and must speak, read and write English fluently.

Do non-citizen service members have the right to become citizens?

Yes. Special provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) authorize U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to expedite the application and naturalization process for current members of the U.S. armed forces and veterans. Generally, qualifying military service includes service with one of the following: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and National Guard. In addition, spouses of members of the U.S. armed forces who are or will be deployed may be eligible for expedited naturalization. Other provisions of the law also allow certain spouses to complete the naturalization process abroad. Forms N-400, Application for Naturalization and N-426, Request for Certification of Military or Naval Service must be filed. Every base has a designated point of contact to handle your application. Posthumous citizenship may be granted to a noncitizen whose death resulted from an injury incurred while on active duty during military hostilities. Please see: www.uscis.gov/news/fact-sheets/naturalization-through-military-service-fact-sheet.

What are the benefits for non-citizen veterans?

If a qualified alien is honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces, the veteran may qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This benefit may also apply to the spouse, widow(er), or dependent child of certain U.S. military personnel. Please find below link to current benefits booklet: www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/2017_Federal_Benefits_for_Veterans.pdf

Are non-citizen veterans eligible for the exemption from college tuition under the Hazelwood Act in Texas?

Yes. The Hazelwood Act is a State of Texas benefit that provides qualified veterans, spouses, and dependent children with an education benefit of up to 150 hours of tuition exemption, including most fee charges, at public institutions of higher education in Texas. This does NOT include living expenses, books, or supply fees. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopted permanent rules to provide that all qualified veterans are eligible for the Hazelwood exemption, regardless of their immigration status at the time they entered the military.

Additional Resources:

US Citizen and Immigration Services

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

800-375-5283

Department of Defense:

www.defense.gov/

Benefits for Texas Veterans:

www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/texas-state-veterans-benefits.html

(800) 733-8394