

GREEN CARD PROCESS

The Adjustment of Status Filing Checklist

What goes in an I-485 package, the filing details that get applications rejected, and the work and travel rules to know before you file.



Prepared by the Ellis Porter content team. This checklist has not been reviewed by an attorney for your specific situation. It is general information, not legal advice; current USCIS form instructions control what your case requires. Details checked against USCIS sources in October 2026.

BEFORE YOU FILE

Two threshold questions

Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, is how you apply for a green card from inside the United States. An I-485 filed too early is rejected or denied, so confirm both of these first.

1 Is a visa immediately available?

USCIS says that in general you may not file until an immigrant visa is immediately available in your category. Immediate relatives of US citizens always qualify. Preference applicants check the Visa Bulletin chart USCIS designates each month on its adjustment filing charts page.

2 Are you eligible to adjust?

That generally means you were inspected and admitted or paroled, you are physically present in the US, and no adjustment bar applies to you (or you are exempt). If you entered without inspection or fell out of status, ask whether the narrow 245(i) exception covers you (Supplement A, page 3). You cannot file an I-485 from abroad.

The details that get filings rejected

- ☐ **The current form edition, on every page.** USCIS published a revised I-485 on September 18, 2026 with no grace period, and as of October 2026 accepts only the 09/18/26 edition. A missing page or a page from another edition can mean rejection. Check uscis.gov/i-485 for the current edition before you print.
- ☐ **Signed.** USCIS says it will reject any unsigned form.
- ☐ **The exact fee, paid the accepted way.** Check the current fee schedule (Form G-1055). An incorrect fee means rejection. Paper filings pay by card on Form G-1450 or by bank withdrawal on Form G-1650, unless exempt.
- ☐ **The medical exam included, if required.** USCIS says Form I-693 must be submitted with the I-485 or the application may be rejected. By mail, it stays in the civil surgeon's sealed envelope.
- ☐ **The current filing address.** USCIS changed I-485 filing locations on October 7, 2026. Check the current Direct Filing Addresses page for your category right before you mail.

THE PACKAGE

What a typical I-485 package includes

The exact list depends on your category. Check off each item as it goes in the envelope or the online filing.

CORE

- ☐ Signed Form I-485 (current edition) and the correct fee
- ☐ Form I-693 medical exam, if required, in the sealed envelope
- ☐ Proof of identity and birth, and of lawful entry, such as your passport and Form I-94
- ☐ The approval or receipt notice for your underlying petition, or the petition itself if filing at the same time

DEPENDING ON YOUR CASE

- ☐ Form I-864 affidavit of support (generally required with the I-485 in family-based cases)
- ☐ Form I-485 Supplement A, for 245(i) applicants
- ☐ Form I-765 if you want to work while you wait
- ☐ Form I-131 if you may need to travel while you wait (read page 4 first)

After you file

- 1 Receipt notice.**
If you file at a lockbox, your A-Number may arrive in a second notice a few days later.
- 2 Biometrics.**
Missing the appointment without rescheduling can lead to denial.
- 3 Interview, if scheduled.**
Bring originals of what you submitted, including passports and Form I-94.
- 4 Request for Evidence, if any.**
Respond by the deadline.

WHILE YOU WAIT

Working while your case is pending

With a pending I-485 you can ask for a work permit (EAD) under category (c)(9). Two 2025 changes matter: USCIS Policy Alert PA-2025-27 cut the maximum (c)(9) validity to 18 months, and renewals filed on or after October 30, 2025 generally do not get an automatic extension, so your work authorization can lapse if the new card is not approved before the old one expires, even when you renew on time. USCIS encourages filing within 180 days of expiration.

Traveling while your case is pending

Leaving without permission usually ends the application. Under 8 CFR 245.2(a)(4), departing while the I-485 is pending generally abandons it, unless you were granted advance parole (Form I-131) or you hold valid H-1 or L-1 status (or H-4 or L-2 through a spouse or parent) and meet the regulation's conditions.

The August 2026 change. In *Matter of Delcarmen-Lara*, 29 I&N Dec. 830 (BIA 2026), the Board of Immigration Appeals held that leaving on advance parole is a departure for the unlawful presence bars. USCIS warns that people with more than 180 days of unlawful presence may be inadmissible when they return. If that describes your history, get individualized advice before any trip.

What you still need

Filing for a green card from inside the US?

An Ellis Porter attorney can confirm your eligibility and build the package on the current edition:
ip.ellisporter.com

*Prepared by the Ellis Porter content team. General information, not legal advice; reading it does not create an attorney-client relationship. Form editions, fees, and filing addresses change; confirm current details at uscis.gov/i-485 before filing. Sources: USCIS Form I-485 page; 8 CFR 245.2(a)(4); USCIS Policy Alert PA-2025-27; *Matter of Delcarmen-Lara*, 29 I&N Dec. 830 (BIA 2026).*