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Lied on your Green Card? Immigration attorney answers why old paperwork errors' are now grounds for deportation

Deportation in the US is most often triggered not by crime, but by immigration paperwork errors or status violations. Under tougher enforcement, even old mistakes can now put visas, green cards, or citizenship at risk.

Written by [Aditi](#)

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How Old Paperwork Mistakes Can Still Get You Removed

Deportation, officially called "removal," is the process through which the US government forces a non-citizen to leave the country for breaking immigration laws. It is one of the most serious actions the government can take, often separating families and upending lives built over decades.

Surprisingly, the most common reason people are deported from the United States is not crime, but immigration status violations. That includes people who entered the US without inspection, overstayed their visa, or violated visa conditions. With more than 11 million people estimated to be undocumented, status violations make up the vast majority of deportation cases.

But there's another risk that's gone largely unnoticed: old paperwork mistakes, once thought long behind, are now being revisited. "The appetite for enforcement has changed," says immigration attorney Rajiv S. Khanna. "The current administration intends to scrutinise applications more aggressively, revisit older cases, and pursue denaturalisation where misrepresentation is discovered."

In other words, even missing or false information on past visas or green cards can become a serious legal problem, years after it was filed.

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What the USCIS law says— and what's changing now

According to Rajiv S. Khanna, Managing Attorney at Immigration.Com, the USCIS law itself has not changed. What has changed is how aggressively it is being enforced. "To put this in context, the law has been clear for decades," Khanna explained. "Misrepresentation in immigration applications has always been grounds for denial, revocation, or deportation. What we are seeing now is not a change in the law itself, but a dramatic shift in enforcement priorities and resources directed at these cases," he told the Financial Express.

In simple terms, immigration authorities are now digging deeper into old applications, even those filed many years ago, to check whether something important was hidden or misstated.

Mistakes vs Lies: Why intent matters

Not every error leads to deportation. Immigration law makes a clear distinction between innocent mistakes and intentional lies. An innocent error could be something like a spelling mistake, a wrong digit in a date, or a clerical slip. These usually do not trigger serious consequences.

But the situation changes when information was deliberately hidden or falsely stated. "Fundamentally, immigration law distinguishes between innocent errors and material misrepresentation. An innocent clerical mistake or misstatement, such as a transposed digit in a date or a misspelled name, is very different from willfully concealing information that would have affected eligibility for the benefit. The legal standard focuses on whether the misrepresentation was material, meaning it had a natural tendency to influence the government's decision or close lines of enquiry, and whether it was willful," Khanna told the Financial Express.

Even naturalised citizens are not fully immune

Many assume that once someone becomes a US citizen, their immigration past no longer matters. That is not entirely true. Khanna explained that even naturalised citizens can lose their citizenship if it is later discovered that they obtained it by hiding key facts.

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“Note that the consequences extend beyond [green card holders](#). This is called denaturalisation, and it is not new,” he explained. “The government has always had this authority, though historically it was used sparingly and primarily in egregious cases such as war criminals or individuals who concealed serious criminal histories.” What is new is the willingness to use this power more often.

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However, one must understand that Immigration applications are legal documents, signed under oath. They must be checked properly and answered honestly. If someone has worries about something they filed in the past, getting advice from a qualified immigration lawyer is crucial before taking any next step.

What are some common grounds for removal?

The grounds for deportation are laid out in the [Immigration and Nationality Act](#), or INA. Section 237 of the law lists several reasons a non-citizen can be removed from the US. These include violations of immigration status, criminal convictions, immigration fraud or misrepresentation, national security concerns, unlawful voting, and certain public charge issues.

Some people are deported for fraud, such as using fake documents or entering into sham marriages. Others face removal for national security reasons, including involvement in terrorism or persecution.

There are also lesser-known grounds like unlawful voting by non-citizens or becoming dependent on public benefits shortly after entry, though these are rarely enforced and often involve unintentional mistakes.

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