



SIDELINES

#MTSUwtp
Constitution Day 2012

By Emily West on Sep 12, 2012 9:21 am in News / no comments

Related Posts

- New minor adds substance to history studies
Sep 12, 2012
- Student media seeks to fulfill positions
Sep 12, 2012
- Cycling program gives students a ride
Sep 12, 2012
- Lecture series bring 'The City' to life
Sep 12, 2012
- Live On The Green brings New Orleans spirit and heat to kick off the season
Sep 12, 2012

Tags

- Citizenship
- Constitution Day
- Immigration
- middle tennessee state university
- MTSU
- Naturalization
- Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
- United States Citizen and Immigration Services

The university will celebrate the 225th anniversary of the United States Constitution and naturalization of 240 new citizens Sept. 17 in Murphy Center, an occasion that highlights the historic and contemporary difficulties of achieving citizenship.

How residents become citizens

After holding a green card for a minimum of five years, lawful permanent residents who wish to become a naturalized citizen of the United States have to go through a naturalization process and fulfill the proper requirements.

"My work is to bring new Americans into citizenship," said Anahi Gutierrez, citizenship and integration coordinator of the Tennessee Immigration and Refugee Coalition. "An immigrant has to become a resident and that is the hardest part. Once they become residents, I try to fully engage them in U.S. society. I see all sorts of people, and we have quite a large demographic."

The residents pursuing naturalization must be 18 or older and live in the same state for three months before filling out the application. They must also live in the United States a minimum of five months while possessing a green card.

Residents also have to remain in the United States through the entire naturalization process from the time they dated and submitted the application. The remaining requirements ask that the potential new Americans read, write and speak English and be knowledgeable of U.S. government and history.

To prove their knowledge about the U.S. and their English-speaking abilities, United States Citizen and Immigration Services test all the applicants through a civics exam.

The civics exam is 100 questions, and ten of the questions must be answered verbally in English. Applicants are required to answer six of the ten verbal questions correctly. The remaining 90 questions are in a testing format.

In addition to the civics exam, future citizens must fulfill the requirement of being an upstanding citizen of the United States during the time they were lawful permanent residents. Residents must maintain a clean record with no arrests or charges brought upon them.



Emily West is a sophomore majoring in journalism and English. She has worked at Sidelines for the past two semesters, and she also works with Collage as the Fiction Editor. You can follow her on Twitter @emwest22 or @Sidelines_News. [Read Full](#)
[More posts by the Author »](#)



[Read Full](#)
[More posts by the Author »](#)



MTSU Sidelines on Facebook

Confirm

You like this Page · [Ins](#)
You like this Page · [Ins](#)

797 people like **MTSU Sidelines**. 796 people like **MTSU Sidelines**.


Blake


Jordan


Cody


Jonathan


Amber

 Facebook social plugin



iamTheImmortal: RT @USDayofRage: Today is Constitution Day, the anniversary of the day the US Constitution was ratified in 1787. #S17 #ows #NDAA #manning ...

23 seconds ago

After fulfilling these requirements, potential citizens have to submit an N-400 form, which is ten pages long. The fee of the application is \$595. The Tennessee Immigration and Refugee Rights and Coalition holds workshops four times a year to help immigrants fill out their paperwork.

“Workshop is one day with trained volunteers that help people complete their applications,” Gutierrez said. “The volunteers help fill out the forms and translate. We also have attorneys who do legal screenings to make sure the people haven’t violated any of the requirements.”

The next workshop from TIRRC is slated for November in Nashville.

Immigration throughout history

Traditionally, immigrants came to the U.S. through a number of processing centers, such as Ellis Island and San Francisco, where they were processed one after another, in near assembly-line fashion.

More than 12 million people passed through Ellis Island alone between 1892 and 1954, according to the National Park Service.

But this system, based on its action and efficiency, had strains.

“The heartbreaking thing about the Ellis Island experience is that if people were ill they got sent back,” said Martha Narkunas, an MTSU history professor who specializes in oral history. “Single women often weren’t allowed at some point because they thought they were going to be prostitutes.”

Modern air travel and an interconnected global economy has transformed the traditional point of entry, but despite calls from across the opinion spectrum for reform of the current system, immigration remains mired in the same political process as any other issue.

“It’s the area of politics that is eluded congress, the president or our leaders on many issues,” said Kent Syler, an MTSU political science professor who also served as chief of staff to U.S. Rep Bart Gordon. “It’s figuring out how to compromise and address the issue and how to move on from there.”

How it affects Middle Tennessee

In recent years, Nashville has become a top destination for a diverse set of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

“Although peoples from various parts of the world have long called Middle Tennessee home, the diversity we see today is a comparatively recent phenomenon, dating to the late 1970s, when overseas students attended the region’s many colleges and universities and large numbers of refugees were resettled for the first time,” said Sean Foley, an MTSU professor of history in a Sept. 7 opinion article in The Tennessean.



AFRO_KIDD6: On my way on home just realizing its Constitution Day wtf!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
[#Annoyed](#)

15 seconds ago



VelmaSGOD: RT @rubyarchbold: happy constitution day!

21 seconds ago



BGrovePatch: Welcome to Local Voices, Carol Sente! Check out her first post at <http://t.co/QYqL3VXR> <http://t.co/ktYZMpME>

22 seconds ago



ICRepublicans: Happy 225th Constitution Day to all Americans celebrating our freedoms around the world. #tcot @crtc

34 seconds ago

[New minor adds substance to history studies](#)

[Less-restrictive immigration policies drive economic growth](#)

[Student media seeks to fulfill positions](#)

[Cycling program gives students a ride](#)

[Lecture series bring 'The City' to life](#)

[Live On The Green brings New Orleans spirit and heat to kick off the season](#)

Foley was traveling and unavailable to speak with Sidelines, but pointed out the article.

One of the most vibrant communities in Nashville is the Kurdish, a group of people from a region of Iraq who were some of the first of the modern wave of immigrants to settle in the area, Foley said.

While the Kurdish and many other groups of immigrants escaped difficult living conditions in other countries, settling in Nashville is a more mysterious aspect of immigration.

Another group of people that came to the U.S. in search of safety is the Karen people from Burma. The Karen people do not have a home country, and have been dealing with constant government problems with Burma for over eighty years.

Smyrna High School math teacher Robert Drake has been teaching Karen students for over six years in his ESL math classes.

"The majority of the students I have in my classes have been refugees," Drake said. "Over the six years I have taught, I have probably taught at least 60 Karen students in my class."

One of Drake's former students, Geo Pew, came to the United States four years ago and graduated Smyrna High School in 2012. She now serves as an educational assistant for Rutherford County Schools and helps translate in ESL classes.

"When I was six, a Burmese soldier came to my village and burned the houses," Pew said. "They shot and killed people, and we had to move. I was then a refugee for ten years. When we lived in the refugee camp, we only had a bamboo house, and everyone had to stay in barbwire. If we went out, the Thai soldier could arrest you and put you in jail. In our refugee camp, the [United Nations] gave us food. It was rice, chili, beans, oil and salt. Every month we would have to eat this."

Pew said that while some of the people she knew in the refugee camp moved to Canada, Europe and Australia, more of her people have moved to the United States.

"They call it chain migration," Narkunas said. "They'll come over and then they will bring their uncle and cousin and brother, and then someone else, a person from their hometown."

Narkunas said this chain creates a critical mass of people that eventually inspires an economy of stores, coffee shops and other businesses and religious centers run by immigrants.

"Why they come to that place initially, I'm not quite sure," Narkunas said. "Usually it's they can get jobs or someone sponsors them."

With many rules and regulations governing different workers and circumstances, the immigration system seems to escape easy classification.

"In Congressman Gordon's office we had an individual who spent probably 50 percent of his time dealing with immigration questions both for individuals and companies who were wanting to bring workers over," Syler said. "We talked with Nissan very

frequently because they would have people coming back and forth from Japan... It really runs the gamut from the Nissans to farmers in Cannon County trying to get workers to get their pimento-pepper crop in.”

In recent years, reform discussions have focused on undocumented immigrants and ways to improve border security. Wide-ranging attempts to address these issues and others facing immigrants applying to become citizens have generally failed in the legislative stage.

The highest-profile failure of immigration reform came most recently in 2007, when a bipartisan bill that garnered support from President George W. Bush as well as Senators John McCain and Edward (Ted) Kennedy failed in Congress.

“When the economy is tough it is especially hard to work on immigration issues,” Syler said. “It is very easy to look at someone who has come to this country undocumented and pretty well put the blame on them for all the ills of the economy.”



You can be the first one to leave a comment.

NAME (REQUIRED):

COMMENT:

E-MAIL (REQUIRED):

WEBSITE:

NOTIFY ME OF FOLLOW-UP COMMENTS BY EMAIL.

NOTIFY ME OF NEW POSTS BY EMAIL.

[Return to top of page](#)

Copyright © 2012 MTSU Sidelines. All rights reserved.

designed by
virtual.blend