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# Ballout Law

A Professional Corporation

January 5, 2023

Via FedEx

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, ✓  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Ur M. Jaddou,  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
5900 Capital Gateway Drive  
Camp Springs, MD 20588

**Re: Removal of Marital Status Designation on Certificates of Naturalization**

Dear Secretary Mayorkas & Director Jaddou:

I am writing to express my concern over the inclusion of marital status on all Certificates of Naturalization, Form N-550 ("Certificate"), issued to newly naturalized U.S. citizens.

With over thirty-two years of experience as an immigration attorney, I see no reason why said Certificate must state the marital status of newly naturalized individuals as it has no impact on one's application, serves no legitimate government interest, and could be misused. This information holds no bearing and, if anything, causes harm.

There are several reasons why the marital status should be removed from this form:

1. Marital status is a personal and private aspect of an individual's life that should not be used to evaluate their worth or ability to contribute to society. It is completely unrelated to one's capability to be a responsible member of the community or a productive citizen. Requiring this information on the certificate of naturalization can create unnecessary obstacles and discrimination for those seeking to become naturalized citizens. It is important to recognize that an individual's marital status does not have any bearing on their character or ability to contribute positively to society.
2. Marital status is not only irrelevant to an individual's qualifications for naturalization but stating such status can be seen as intrusive and unnecessary.

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3. Including marital status on a certificate of naturalization can be seen as a violation of an individual's privacy. When proof of citizenship is required for situations such as employment or obtaining a driver's license, individuals may be hesitant to disclose their marital status due to personal or cultural reasons. For example, when completing the compulsory I-9 form for employment, an individual may be required to present their Certificate of Naturalization as proof of authorization to work, exposing their marital status to their employer whether or not they wish to do so. Furthermore, an employer (or the Dept of Motor Vehicles) is required to keep a copy of the certificate on file, making this personal information accessible to HR and management staff. Requiring individuals to disclose their marital status in these situations can be seen as intrusive and a violation of their right to privacy.
4. The inclusion of marital status on a Certificate could lead to discrimination. For example, a "single," or "divorced" person may be treated differently or unfairly compared to a "married" person in the workplace. Furthermore, "married" to who? Man or woman can lead to discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation. Additionally, the inclusion of marital status could perpetuate negative stereotypes or biases about individuals. Overall, disclosing this information on a Certificate could perpetuate negative and harmful stereotypes.
5. Finally, the inclusion of marital status on a Certificate of Naturalization may not be practical due to the fluid nature of this personal information. If the certificate states "single" or "divorced" at the time of naturalization, an individual may feel compelled or pressured to apply for and obtain a new Certificate when they get married, or vice versa. People get divorced, married, widowed, or re-married all the time and the process to keep their marital status updated and accurate means applying for a new Certificate, incurring unnecessary fees, appearing for an interview, hiring legal help, submitting paperwork, and other administrative burdens. For example, I had a client who felt they needed to apply for a new certificate "out of respect" to their spouse and change their marital status from single to married.
6. In today's age, and social changes, there is no compelling reason for the U.S. government, DHS, or CIS to compel the listing of this information on a naturalization certificate. With over one million naturalizations completed in 2022, this issue becomes increasingly important.

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Secretary Mayorkas & Director Jaddou  
Removal of Marital Status Designation  
on Certificate of Naturalization (N-550)  
January 5, 2023  
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**The U.S. passport application requires the marital status but does NOT list it on the passport.**

The U.S. passport application, DS-11, just like the N-400 Naturalization application, requires information about the marital history, however, this marital information is NOT listed on the U.S. passport. I recommend that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services follow the Department of State's lead and remove the requirement for marital status on the naturalization certificate.

**Actions that CIS can take immediately**

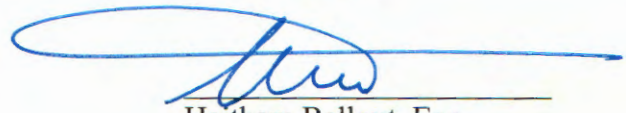
Until the Form is changed to remove the marital status listing, CIS can immediately instruct its CIS officers to cease printing marital status on forms, and, for now, this space can simply read "no longer required."

I strongly urge you to remove the delineation for marital status on the certificate of naturalization. It is unnecessary, violates individual's right to privacy, is potentially discriminatory, is inaccurate in the long run as it is fluid, and serves no legitimate government purpose.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (650) 373-1122, by email [hb@balloutlaw.com](mailto:hb@balloutlaw.com), or mail at 410 North San Mateo Dr., San Mateo, Calif. 94401.

Happy New Year.

Respectfully,  
Ballout Law, APC



Haitham Ballout, Esq.

**Enclosure:** Sample N-550 Form

Cc: AILA

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



SAMPLE No.

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization:

USCIS Registration No.

Date of birth: Sex:

I certify that the description given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(Complete and true signature of holder)

Height: 5 feet 11 inches

Be it known that, pursuant to an application filed with the Secretary of Homeland Security

Marital status: MARRIED ??

Country of former nationality:

at: SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The Secretary having found that:

SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE SAMPLE

residing at:

FOSTER CITY, CALIFORNIA

SAMPLE

having complied in all respects with all of the applicable provisions of the naturalization laws of the United States, being entitled to be admitted as a citizen of the United States, and having taken the oath of allegiance at a ceremony conducted by

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

at: SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

on:

such person is admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

SAMPLE SAMPLE

U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

ALTERATION OR MISUSE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS A FEDERAL OFFENSE AND PUNISHABLE BY LAW

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

February 10, 2023

Haitham Ballout, Esq.  
410 N San Mateo Drive  
San Mateo, CA 94401

Dear Mr. Ballout:

Thank you for your January 5, 2023 letter regarding the removal of the marital status designation on Certificates of Naturalization. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on naturalization, and Secretary Mayorkas has asked that I respond on his behalf.

For Certificates of Naturalization, the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) says that the certificate “shall contain substantially” a list of data elements, including “personal description of the naturalized person, including age, sex, marital status, and country of former nationality.” See INA 338, 8 U.S.C. 1449. While marital status is included in the list of data elements, USCIS is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the statute and legislative history and will consider your recommendation regarding the exclusion of marital status as a data element on Certificates of Naturalization and Certificates of Citizenship, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director