

# Citizenship

## MILITARY SERVICE

It is possible to join the military at age 17, with your parents' consent. However, once you turn 18, you can join the military without your parents' consent.

Every male who was born after January 1, 1960, must register for selective service (the draft). You may register for the draft 120 days (four months) before your 18th birthday, but you must register within 30 days (one month) after your 18th birthday. You must keep your registration updated until your 26th birthday. Selective service registration forms are available at any local post office and you can now register online at <http://www.sss.gov>.

The penalties for not registering are fines up to \$250,000 dollars and/or the possibility of spending up to five years in prison. Also, you may not be eligible for federal jobs or federal financial aid if you fail to register.

## VOTING

General elections are held the first Tuesday (after the first Monday) in November in even numbered years. Ballot issue elections are held on the first Tuesday in November in odd numbered years.

To vote in an election in Colorado, you must be:

- A citizen of the United States
- A resident of a Colorado precinct for 30 days before the election
- 18 years old on or before the election date, and
- Registered as a voter at least 29 days before the election.

Call the county clerk for the county where you live, or the election commission office for the county where you live, to find out where to register. It is possible to register to vote at any driver's license office or public assistance agency, many public libraries, by mail if you use an approved form available at any county clerk's office, or online at your county clerk and recorders office. For voter registration forms and clerk and recorder information, go to: [http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/voter\\_reg\\_form.pdf](http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/voter_reg_form.pdf).

If your 18th birthday is less than twenty-nine days before the election, you may still register (at least twenty-nine days before the election date), even if you aren't 18 at the time you register.

Because of new requirements under the Patriot Act you will now be required to show a valid photo i.d. when you vote.

## JURY DUTY



You qualify for jury service if:

- you are able to read and write English
- you are at least 18 years old
- you are a citizen of the state and resident of the county (or city) where you would serve as a juror, and
- you have not served five or more days as a juror in the last year.

Names of possible jurors are selected at random from voter registration lists. A notice is sent to appear in court (you can have one postponement of your jury service without a specific reason). More jurors are called than will actually be needed to hear a case, because some people may be excused or disqualified.

Jurors may be excused by the judge if they have a physical or mental disability (one must show medical proof of the disability to be excused) or if one is the sole caretaker of a disabled person who lives in the same home. The judge may disqualify a person from jury service in a particular case if the person is: a witness in the case; related by blood or marriage to one of the parties; prejudiced for or against a party; or if the person has a financial or legal interest in the subject matter.

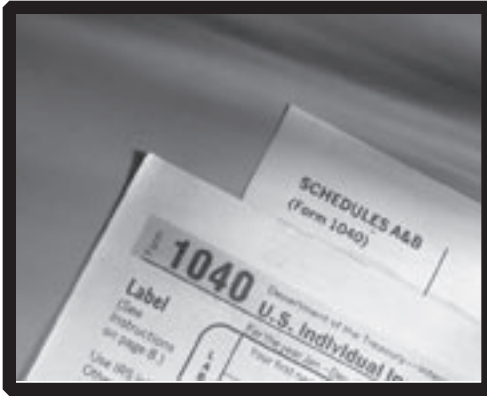
Once a group of jurors is assigned to a case, the judge and lawyers may ask the jurors questions. Then, the lawyers may ask that some jurors be excused for cause, such as bias or financial interest, or for no particular reason at all. When a lawyer asks that a juror be excused for no particular reason, it is called a preemptory challenge. Each lawyer has a specific number of preemptory challenges available to them.

If you are sent a notice for jury service and are not excused for any reason, you must serve at least one day as a trial juror. The length of the trial will determine how long jurors will serve.

Grand jurors serve for twelve months. Grand jurors are called to help with investigations and indictments, but do not hear trial cases. They listen to testimony and evidence as a trial juror would, but do not decide guilt or innocence; they determine if a case warrants going to trial, based on the evidence.

Jurors will be paid for jury service either by the court or by one's employer (up to \$50 per day). The employer must pay regular wages for the first three days of jury service. The pay rate for part-time and temporary employees will be determined by the salary they were paid for the three months preceding jury service. If you are unemployed, you may get reimbursed by the court (up to \$50) for day care expenses, travel expenses, or other necessary expenses (not including food).

## TAXATION



Taxation without representation was a major motivating factor in America's fight for independence and self-determination. A tax is a burden or charge assessed by federal, state, and local governments to generate revenue. There are many types of taxes.

Income taxes are assessed and collected by the federal government and the state from individuals, corporations, partnerships, trusts, and other legal entities. Even children under 14 years of age may be taxed on income. Every U.S. citizen and every U.S. resident must file an income tax return if their gross income is \$2,550 or more for the tax year. Income tax returns must be filed by April 15 every year. An automatic extension for filing the return may be obtained. However, the correct amount of tax has to be paid by April 15 or the taxpayer may be liable for penalties and interest. Employers are required to withhold money from their employees' wages and forward it to the Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") for their employees' projected federal and state income taxes. Individuals who are self-employed may have to pay estimated amounts for income taxes to the IRS and the state of Colorado on a quarterly basis. Income tax laws are complex and change regularly, and it is recommended that a tax expert be consulted when preparing income tax returns.

Most employers are required to withhold the Federal Insurance Contributions Act ("FICA") tax from wages paid to their employees. Most employers are required to pay FICA tax on the amount of wages paid to each employee during the calendar year. People who are self-employed also are required to pay FICA tax. The FICA tax generates revenue for Social Security and other programs. Social Security is a comprehensive contributing insurance plan to protect workers and their dependents from the risk of loss of income due to old age, death, or disability.

Federal and state governments also impose excise taxes. Excise taxes are imposed on the right to exercise a privilege. There are numerous federal and state excise taxes, some of which include: the federal and state gasoline tax; state and local government sales and use taxes; and taxes payable when paying licensing and registration fees.

Annually, Colorado taxes motor vehicle owners based on the taxable value of their vehicles. The amount of the tax decreases as the motor vehicle gets older and its value decreases.

The state, counties, and special districts also assess taxes on the owners of real property and personal property. Real property is land, including improvements on it (houses, buildings). Personal property is anything other than real property. Personal property is generally movable, while real property is not. The amount of the tax generally is based on the value of the property at a particular time and location. There is an appeal process if the taxpayer disputes the assessor's valuation. The type of property determines the rate on which the property is taxed. Commercial, residential, and agricultural properties are taxed at different rates.

The City and County of Denver collects an employment head tax for all persons employed within its jurisdiction. Anyone working in Denver must currently pay \$5.75 per month. Likewise, employers currently have to pay \$5.25 per month for each of their employees.

## **IMMIGRATION AND THE PATRIOT ACT**

The acts of terrorism against the United States on September 11, 2001 have resulted in a lot of changes to the immigration laws of the United States and may even have consequences for citizens whose parents or grandparents are from a different country of origin. The United States government has declared a war on terrorism. As a result, certain groups have been identified as fitting into "terrorist profiles." Terrorist profiling exposes alien and citizen Muslims, as well as aliens and naturalized citizens from other countries to heightened scrutiny, and may also be used to identify those who criticize the government's foreign or national security policy. Terrorist profiling may affect you even though you are a citizen and were born in this country.

United States immigration law tends to assume that aliens residing in the United States remain loyal to the country from which they came. When tensions arise between the United States and another country, the United States has the power to detain or remove the citizens of that country. With the passage of the Patriot Act and other security laws, citizens and aliens of many countries are now required to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service and to be fingerprinted and photographed.

The Patriot Act also authorizes broad surveillance methods, many of them conducted without consent, including physical searches. The Attorney General of the U.S., and law enforcement officers, now have much broader powers to obtain information they believe may lead to evidence of terrorist activity. If you are an alien, it is important that you always have with you documents that show that you are lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States. If you are an alien student, you should check with your schools administrative offices to determine if you are required to register and if you are from a country designated as a threat to national security.

It is the duty of every alien now in the United States, who is 14 years of age or older and who has not been registered and fingerprinted and remains in the United States for thirty days or longer, to apply for registration and to be fingerprinted within thirty days of arrival. If you are a student, you should always have available your passport and alien registration statement, evidence of enrollment from your school, evidence from school officials showing that you are maintaining the proper number of credit hours, and evidence of your current address.

If you are a lawful permanent resident, you should always have identification, with a photograph, that clearly indicates your status. If you are a naturalized citizen, it is in your best interests to have a U.S. passport. Remember that you are entitled to the services and protections that all citizens have. Contact your congressional representative or one of the many state agencies if you need assistance.

A partial list of websites related to immigration and the effects of the Patriot Act are listed in the "Resources" section of this booklet.

