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I have been practicing immigration law for the past fifteen years. During this period, the N-400 has grown from a relatively short and straight-forward application (03/22/12 version was 10 pages long) that the vast majority of lawful permanent residents could handle on their own without the assistance of an attorney to a lengthy form with duplicative, confusing questions that are irrelevant to most applicants.

For instance, Qs. 38-43 should be indented and expressly ONLY apply to individuals who answered "yes" to Q. 37 ("Have you ever served in the U.S. armed forces?" All other applicants should be directed to skip Qs. 38-43.

Question 13 should be taken off entirely, those who were at least 18 years old in 1945 would be 95 years old now. Continuing to have these questions on the application causes a greater likelihood of typographical error leading a box to be checked as they apply to almost no one.

Part 11 should be shortened. While including the applicant's children's information on the application is fine, their street addresses are not relevant to statutory eligibility and give rise to potential privacy concerns for the children. Information on children should be limited to names, dates of birth, alien numbers, if known, and location (country only).

Part 10, Question 8 should not be on the application. It is ultra vires and irrelevant to an Applicant's statutory eligibility for naturalization. There is no eligibility ground relevant to being able to list your current spouses' prior spouses' name and date of birth. This can be particularly challenging where an Applicant is in a domestic violence situation and may not feel comfortable asking their current spouse/abuser this information about the abuser's prior spouse.

Applicants should only be required to list detailed spouse information if applying on the basis of the three-year rule of living in marital union with a U.S. citizen spouse. If an applicant is applying on the basis of the five-year residence rule, his or her spouse's date of birth, address and employer are completely irrelevant.

Finally, as with the former four-page I-485 application form around 2007, the N-400 should exclude minor traffic infractions from the questions about prior criminal history. Because the instructions request detailed information about each incident, my clients and I have wasted hundreds of hours over the years trying to track down old tickets for traffic infractions and proof of payment from out of state jurisdictions.

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