

# LAYNE LAW GROUP

## Newsletter

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**Lawne Law Group**

**Attorney Bernadine Layne** has been practicing immigration law in Georgia for over 20 years. She earned her law degree from Harvard Law School. She is admitted to practice law in Georgia and the District of Columbia.

Our immigration practice is national and can represent clients all over the United States.

We can assist with family or immigration- sponsorship for spouse of a US citizen, child of US citizen, other relatives of US citizens; employment based visas – H1B, L-1 visas; investment visas; asylum, NACARA, and deportation defense.

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### **CORONA VIRUS UPDATE ON LAYNE LAW OFFICE HOURS**

In an attempt to keep our clients and staff safe during this difficult time of social distancing, we have moved to flexible work arrangements since last week. No one will be in the office and we will be working remotely for the time being.

We are still working on your cases and responding to all of your requests via email, phone and text. Be assured that we are working hard for you and doing everything we can to assist you, while we keep you and our staff safe. Please be patient with us if we don't get to return your call immediately. There are many court cases that are being rescheduled and we have to let clients know.

Please continue to call, email or text us if we can help you in any way. Texting or email is the best way to reach us. Both the English and Spanish phones can text.

### **CORONA VIRUS RELIEF BILL: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU**

#### **STIMULUS CHECK**

Payments up to \$1,200 per person, with an additional \$500 per child under 17, will be made to U.S. residents with a Social Security number who earn under \$75,000. Married couples, will receive up to \$2,400. The IRS will use 2019 return to calculate eligibility and automatically send the money to those who qualify. If you have not filed a 2019 return, payment will be based on the 2018 return. **This will not apply to holders of Tax ID (TIN).**

#### **CHANGES TO UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS: MORE \$ PER WEEK**

This bill adds \$600 per week from the federal government on top of whatever base amount a worker receives from the state. That boosted payment will last for four (4) months.

#### **SELF EMPLOYED AND CONTRACTORS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT**

Usually, self-employed people, freelancers and contractors can't apply for unemployment. This bill creates a new, temporary Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program through the end of this year to help

people who lose work as a direct result of the public health emergency.

#### **UPDATE ON IMMIGRATION CLOSINGS**

Most of the courts we go to are closed until, at least, **May 4** and the President has issued a National Stay at Home Order telling non-essential workers to work from home for the next 2 to 3 weeks.

#### **ICE Report**

The ERO officers will be calling individuals scheduled to report, but ERO imagines that a lot of the phone numbers might be out of date, so they want individuals with report dates to call **404-893-1248** between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on the day they are scheduled to report unless an ERO officer has already called them and completed the reporting. If you are scheduled to report on a Monday or Friday, do not call the number on those days, you should call on a Tuesday-Thursday of the same week.

#### **USCIS CLOSINGS**

On March 18, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) temporarily suspended in-person services at its field offices, asylum offices, and application support centers (ASCs) to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). USCIS offices will begin to reopen on May 4 unless the public closures are extended further. Employees in these offices are continuing to perform mission-essential services that do not require face-to-face contact with the public.

#### **REUSE BIOMETRICS FOR EAD/WORK PERMITS RENEWAL**

USCIS announced that it will reuse previously submitted biometrics in order to process valid Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, extension requests

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due to the temporary closure of Application Support Centers (ASC) to the public in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **DDS: AUTOMATIC 120 DAY EXTENSION OF DRIVER'S LICENSE, ID OR PERMIT**

Your Driver's license, ID, or permit will be automatically extended for 120 days if it has an expiration date between **March 14, 2020, and June 30, 2020**, if it is not a learner's permit (Class CP). This extension will be provided to everybody free of charge and will arrive in the mail within 30 days. This extension will be provided regardless of the expiration date on the immigration documents you provided to DDS.

For those who are already holding a 120 extension, your 120-day temporary card will be automatically extended for an additional 120 days if it has an expiration date between March 14, 2020, and June 30, 2020, if it is not a learner's permit (Class CP). This extension will be provided to you free of charge and will arrive in the mail within 30 days.

### **NEW PUBLIC CHARGE RULE (AILA)**

USCIS implemented a new rule, **effective February 24, 2020**, to decide who will be considered a "Public Charge" (someone that is likely to need financial assistance from the government). The Department of State (DOS) also implemented an interim final rule, **effective February 24, 2020**, to align DOS's public charge standards with those of USCIS.

### **HOW DOES THIS IMPACT ME?**

If you or your employee are seeking to remain or come to the United States either temporarily or permanently and are not in one of

the exempt categories below, the rule will apply to you if you file on or after February 24, 2020. You will need to provide additional information and documents to USCIS as part of your application. This includes information about your health, family, education, income, assets, liabilities, receipt of any public benefits, and an Affidavit of Support from a financial sponsor. If you are found to be inadmissible as a Public Charge, you may be able to pay a bond and still adjust, change or extend your status.

Not everyone is subject to the public charge rule. The most common exceptions are the following:

- Asylees and Refugees
- Applicants for U or T Nonimmigrant Status
- VAWA Self-Petitioners
- Special Immigrant Juveniles
- Applicants seeking Temporary Protected Status
- Applicants under the Cuban Adjustment Act
- U.S. citizens, including naturalized citizens
- Lawful Permanent Residents (note: if you plan to be abroad for more than 180 days, please talk to your attorney)

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?**

Call us about how the new rule affects you. Talk to us about any past receipt of benefits and before applying for any new benefits.

### **WHAT BENEFITS ARE PROBLEMS FOR PUBLIC CHARGE?**

- Cash Assistance for Income Maintenance (includes TANF, SSI, and federal, state, and local assistance programs)
- SNAP or Food Stamps
- Medicaid (with exceptions

listed below)

- Housing Assistance (Public
- Housing or Section 8 Housing Vouchers and Rental Assistance)

### **WHAT BENEFITS MAY MY FAMILY AND I STILL RECEIVE?**

Any benefits not on the above list are NOT considered as public benefits under the public charge rule, such as:

- Benefits received by the immigrant's family members
- Benefits received by U.S. Armed Forces Service Members
- Emergency medical assistance
- Medicaid received by (1) children under 21; (2) during pregnancy or within 60 days of pregnancy; or (3) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Health Insurance under the Affordable Care Act
- Social Security and Medicare
- WIC
- CHIP
- Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Pell grants and student loans
- Worker's Compensation or Unemployment Benefits
- Tax-related cash benefits

### **STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY!**

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