

CHECKLIST · SOUTH CAROLINA

Moving to South Carolina Checklist: The First 90 Days (2026)

Four separate utility regimes exist and which one applies changes with the street address. One single 45 days for the license and the vehicle, ten days for the USCIS notice.

SHORT ANSWER

We start this list with a warning, because skipping it sends everything else to the wrong address: **in South Carolina four separate legal regimes for utilities run side by side, and which one you are in is set by your street address, not your city.** Even inside Mount Pleasant an electric cooperative's territory and a regulated private company's territory sit next to each other. On deadlines, the certain ones are these: **10 days for the USCIS address notice, 5 days** if you have a pending case in immigration court, and on the state side **one single 45 days** that covers both the license and the vehicle registration. Renting carries this series' sharpest trap: a **single boilerplate paragraph** in your lease can let an eviction begin **five days after a late rent payment with no further notice at all.** And the health gap is deep: **for a childless adult without a disability there is no Medicaid category at any income level.**

WE SAY IT FIRST: THERE ARE FOUR SEPARATE UTILITY REGIMES

- **Regulated private company.** The rules come from the state public service commission (regulation chapter 103) and complaints are investigated by the **Office of Regulatory Staff**. The deposit cap, the guarantor route, deposit interest, the installment right, the 25-day rule and the December to March medical certificate **all apply here**.
- **Electric cooperative.** The rules come from **the cooperative's own board**, because the statute **expressly exempts** cooperatives from the commission's jurisdiction and supervision, apart from a closed list of sections. Regulation chapter 103 **does not bind it**, and **the deposit and identification policy is the cooperative's own decision**.
- **State authority.** Created by statute with its own board; the commission assigns its service territory but the chapter does not subject retail rates to the commission's rate authority. **A fourth rule book**, and because we could not read the rate-setting section we carry this line as **highly likely rather than settled**.
- **Municipality and public works commission.** In Mount Pleasant water and sewer are run by a **separately elected public works commission** and garbage by the town. Neither regulation chapter 103 nor the cooperative sections apply; the policy, deposit and identification rules are the utility's own.
- **And here is the trap:** across the greater Mount Pleasant area cooperative and private-company territories **sit side by side**. Research could not establish the exact boundary inside the town and we invent no shortcut rule: **you have to run your own street address through both companies' own lookup tools**. That is the first thing to do before you move.

Deadlines: we separate the certain from the not found

TASK	DEADLINE	WHERE
USCIS address notice	10 days. Moving within the state requires a notice too	Through your online account or on form AR-11
Notice to the immigration court	5 days , if you have a pending case	On form EOIR-33/IC
License and vehicle registration	One single 45 days , both in the same window	A branch that serves non-citizens; for the vehicle, the county auditor and treasurer first
County vehicle property tax	Before registration , in advance	The county auditor issues the bill, the county treasurer collects it
Legal residence application	If you bought a home, January 15	The county assessor
Six percent notice	If the home will not be your residence, January 31	The same assessor; miss it and the 25 percent transfer exemption is lost

Two rows in this table mislead readers often. First: **a postal forwarding order is not an AR-11**, and satisfying the AR-11 duty **does not update the address in a pending application by itself**; do both, and enter the receipt number of every pending case. Second: someone who moves here gives their address to several

state bodies in the first week (the transportation agency for the license, the county auditor for the vehicle tax, the provider for electricity and water, the district for school) but **none of those is an AR-11** and the 10-day federal clock runs independently of all of them. In South Carolina this section matters more for two reasons: **the state has no immigration court**, your hearing is held in another state and your only link to that court is the mail; and **we publish no verified USCIS office address**, so only the letter you receive tells you which building to go to. If your address is wrong, both chains break at once. One thing changed in 2026 as well: account for the federal rule that **took effect on June 29, 2026** and rewrites alien registration and what counts as evidence of registration, readable at [federalregister.gov](https://www.federalregister.gov).

The first thirty days

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ File the USCIS address notice within 10 days	uscis.gov/addresschange ; update the address in your pending case separately, and if you have a court case use EOIR-33/IC within 5 days
☐ Find out which electric regime your address is in	A cooperative or a regulated company? The answer changes every deposit, shutoff and complaint line in this list. Run your street address through both companies' lookup tools
☐ Go to a separate body for water and sewer	In Mount Pleasant water is not a town department but a separately elected commission; 843-884-9626 . We could not verify the account-opening document list, so ask for it in writing
☐ Ask for the deposit amount and the guarantor route	At a regulated company the cap is an estimated sixty-day bill ; the regulation expressly names a co-signer or guarantor on the same system within the state
☐ Book the license appointment at the right branch	The Mount Pleasant branch does not serve non-citizens; the Leeds Avenue, Orleans Road and Ladson branches do. Go with two proofs of address
☐ Register the vehicle	The order is county auditor, county treasurer, then the branch ; no registration without the original paid tax receipt. If you have no license yet, your visa-bearing passport is accepted at the counter
☐ Call the town for garbage and the county for recycling	Cart 843-849-2022 , recycling 843-720-7111 . There is no 3-1-1 line , so save the numbers one by one
☐ Read every withholding line on your first pay stub	State tax has two brackets : 1.99 percent under \$30,000, and 5.21 percent minus \$966 at \$30,000 and above. A federal W-4 is not enough, give your employer the state's own W-4
☐ Try both health doors at once	The agency itself tells you to apply for Medicaid even if you are unsure; apply to the marketplace too, because if you are found Medicaid eligible your file is transferred automatically . Member line 888-549-0820
☐ If you have a child to enroll, prioritize the notary and the utility account	The affidavit of residency must be notarized , and utility bills are named as a category two document; language requests 843-937-6359

Utilities: the number question, the deposit and the installment right

At a regulated company the good news and the bad news arrive together. Research scanned the official text of the public service commission's regulation chapter 103 end to end, and the result fits in two sentences: **the regulation never mentions a Social Security number**, so there is no rule that you will be refused for lacking one, but there is also no rule promising you an alternative to a number. **Instead the legislature wrote a guarantor route.** In the regulation's words, a deposit may be required from a new customer only if that customer **cannot demonstrate by suitable means that they are a satisfactory credit risk**, and those suitable means include a letter of good credit from an electric utility, references the company can check quickly and cheaply, **or an acceptable co-signer or guarantor within South Carolina on the same system who will secure payment up to the maximum deposit amount.** For a newcomer the practical consequence is this: you will probably be asked for a deposit because you have no U.S. credit file, but **finding a guarantor who holds an account with the same company is a statutorily recognized way out.**

ITEM	RULE
Deposit cap	For a new customer, up to an amount equal to an estimated sixty-day bill . For seasonal use, the sum of the highest two consecutive months of the previous twelve
Interest	Simple interest at the rate set by the commission, but only if the deposit is held longer than six months . It accrues annually and is paid when the deposit is refunded
Receipt	The company must issue a receipt and must provide a means of proving your claim if the receipt is lost
Installment right	The company must offer a deferred payment plan : keeping the account current plus paying at least one sixth of the remaining balance over a period not exceeding six months . Service cannot be disconnected unless you have been told the plan exists
The 25-day floor	In statute for both regulated companies and cooperatives: service cannot be disconnected for nonpayment until twenty-five days have passed from the date of the bill
Complaint route	The company must tell a complaining customer that it is under the commission's jurisdiction and that the customer may go to the Office of Regulatory Staff; 1-800-922-1531
No protection at all for internet	Internet is not a service the commission regulates: no deposit cap, no guarantor rule, no shutoff protection . We also could not verify which provider opens an account without a number

If you are in cooperative territory the rule book changes. What remains in your hands: the **25-day floor** before disconnection, a **special needs member** definition identical to the one at regulated companies, the cooperative's own **written disconnection procedure** including its own extreme heat and extreme cold standards (filed with the regulatory office and updated every six months), and **third-party notification** which must at least be considered. The regulatory office has supervisory authority limited to exactly those sections, but the statute adds a caveat: if the cooperative's board **exercised its business judgment consistent with sound operating and management practices**, the office has no authority to alter the resulting decisions. And **the cooperative's deposit, identification and number policy is its own**; research could not verify it, so we do not write here what it will ask for. Call before you open the account and **ask for the required documents in writing.**

THE SHUTOFF THRESHOLD IS SET BY YOUR PROVIDER, NOT BY THE STATE

- The statute requires both regulated companies and cooperatives to write disconnection procedures applicable **for all residential customers during periods marked by extreme cold or extreme hot weather conditions**. The critical clause is this: those procedures must include **standards for how extreme cold or extreme hot weather conditions will be determined**. So **the company picks the number, the state does not**.
- The procedures are filed with the regulatory office and revisions are filed twice a year, **by March 1 and September 1**. The regulation directs the company to **publish its procedure on its own website**.
- **That is why this guide prints no temperature figure: there is no statewide number**. Research **could not find** the standard filed by either the company or the cooperative serving the area, so we offer no estimate. The task is to learn your provider's name and read the procedure on its site.
- **The only calendar-based protection is medical**. The regulation's sentence: **between the months of December and March** a residential customer's service will not be disconnected if the customer or a member of the household delivers, **at least 3 days before** the disconnection or to the crew at the time, a form provided by the company and **signed by a licensed physician** stating that disconnection would be **especially dangerous** to that person's health. **The certificate expires on the thirty-first day** and can be renewed **at most three times**, 30 days each.
- **A special needs account, by contrast, works in every season**: a licensed health care provider documents that disconnection would be dangerous to health, **or** the customer has documented **Alzheimer disease or dementia**.
- Other weather is **discretionary**: the regulation's exact word is that disconnection **may be postponed** in the event of adverse weather, an emergency or an operational conflict. Not required. And **a public safety emergency suspends all of these sections**. The statute also says of itself: this group of sections **creates no new private right of action and no new duty of care**.

Renting: three negative answers, and one paragraph to hunt for

- **Rent control is barred to every local government by state statute**. The statute's sentence: no county or municipality may enact, maintain or enforce an ordinance or resolution that **in any way regulates the amount of rent to be charged** for privately owned single-family, multi-unit residential or commercial rental property. The only exceptions are property the local government **itself owns** and voluntary agreements with private parties.
- **No source of income protection was found**. The protected classes in the state fair housing law are **race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin** and disability; source of income is not on the list. Research found no local ban either, but it also found no state section **preempting** local bans. **We say "we found none", not "there is none."**
- **A small landlord is exempt from the law itself**. The fair housing law does not apply to: rooms or units in a dwelling containing living quarters for **no more than four families** living independently, provided the owner actually occupies one of them and maintains the property; and a single-family house rented by a private individual who owns **no more than three** such houses at a time, provided no real estate broker is used and no unlawful advertisement is placed. **So for an immigrant renting a room in an owner-occupied house, the state fair housing law may simply not apply**.

- **No protective provision was found for immigration or citizenship status.** But **national origin is protected**, and that is a renter's real footing here; the complaint route runs through the state **human affairs commission** and a complaint is filed **in writing** on the commission's form. The commission must investigate **within thirty days** of receiving it and notify the complainant in writing whether it intends to resolve the matter.
- **Notice periods: 7 days** written notice for either party in a week-to-week tenancy, **30 days** in a month-to-month tenancy. For a tenant breach other than nonpayment, **14 days** written notice, and the lease does not terminate if the tenant cures in time.
- **We found no cap on the deposit amount**, but the return rules are solid: every deduction must be **itemized in a written notice**, and the deadline is **thirty days** after the later of termination of the tenancy, delivery of possession and the tenant's demand. If the return is not made with the required notice the tenant may recover **three times the amount wrongfully withheld** plus reasonable attorney fees.
- **And there is a condition, do not miss it:** the tenant must give the landlord **a written new address or mailing address**. If the tenant does not, and the landlord does not know the tenant's whereabouts and mailed the notice and the money to the last known address, **the tenant loses the right to that recovery**. The most profitable thing you can do on moving day is hand over that note.

HUNT FOR THIS SENTENCE IN YOUR LEASE, BECAUSE IT IS THE SHARPEST TRAP IN THE SERIES

- The statute regulates the duty to give written notice on nonpayment and then recognizes **two ways to close that duty permanently**: if the landlord has given such a notice **once**, the duty is deemed satisfied for that rental period; **or** if the lease contains a specific boilerplate paragraph, the duty never arises at all.
- The sentence that paragraph ends with reads: "**This is your notice. If you do not pay your rent within five days of the due date, the landlord can start to have you evicted. You will get no other notice as long as you live in this rental unit.**"
- **And the statute carries that clause into the month-to-month tenancy that continues after the stated rental period.** So if the clause is in your lease, even a year later, **a rent payment five days late** may bring no warning to your door and the eviction process simply runs.
- **What to do: hunt for that paragraph** before you sign. If it is there, put the rent on automatic payment and never use the five-day margin. A separate distress procedure for unpaid rent also remains in magistrate court, with a preliminary hearing to be held **at least 5 days** after service of the notice and affidavit.
- Know the statute's other footholds by name, because they are what you will look for when something goes wrong: the landlord's **duty to maintain the premises**; the tenant's remedies for the **unlawful failure to supply essential services**; remedies for a **lockout or unlawful eviction**; **access and abuse of access**, where either party may seek injunctive relief **without posting bond**; **payment of rent into court** when the tenant raises a defense; and **prohibited provisions** in a rental agreement. Where the landlord's noncompliance is **willful**, the tenant has a right to reasonable attorney fees.

If you bought a home: two dates, and more than a twofold difference

If you are buying a home, the largest money item on this list is here. **The difference between an owner-occupant and a non-occupant is more than twofold**, because two things stack: the assessment ratio is **4 percent** for an occupant and **6 percent** for a non-occupant; and the statute exempts **100 percent of the fair market value of owner-occupied residential property that qualifies for and receives the 4 percent ratio from all property taxes imposed for school operating purposes**, with only millage imposed to repay general obligation debt outside the exemption. So a non-occupant or landlord owner pays **both the 6 percent ratio and the school operating millage**. Repealing or reducing the exemption is not easy either: the statute requires a **recorded roll call vote of at least two thirds in both houses**. The 4 percent ratio covers **the legal residence plus up to five acres** of contiguous land, and a residence does not qualify **unless it is determined to be the domicile of the owner-applicant**. Qualifying during **any part of a year** gives the ratio and the exemption **for the entire year**.

THE APPLICATION TRAP LANDS SQUARELY ON THE NEWCOMER

- On the application you certify, **under penalty for perjury**, that the residence is your legal residence and domicile; that neither you nor any member of your household claims to be a legal resident of another jurisdiction **for any purpose**; and that neither you nor they claim this ratio on another residence.
- **And here is the trap.** The statute itemizes the proof the assessor may require: **a copy of the owner's most recently filed South Carolina individual income tax return; copies of the South Carolina registrations for all motor vehicles registered in the owner's name and registered at the same address**; and other proof the assessor considers necessary.
- **A family newly arrived in the state that buys a home in its first months has neither:** you have not yet filed a South Carolina return, and you may not have registered the vehicle yet.
- **The practical order:** register the vehicle, do not delay your first South Carolina return, and if your paper trail is thin in year one ask the assessor **in writing** what they will accept under the third clause. A properly completed certification plus qualification means, in the statute's own words, that the owner has **met the burden of proof**. If you fail to notify the assessor **within six months** when your eligibility ends, a penalty follows.
- **Do not be misled by the seller's bill.** The statute says fair market value is **reset as of December 31 of the year in which an assessable transfer of interest in the property occurs**, and the **15 percent cap over five years** that applies in countywide reassessments **does not apply** in precisely the year the transfer value first becomes taxable. The one-line version: the seller's tax bill is not your tax bill.
- **If the home will not be your residence, do not miss January 31.** Property subject to the 6 percent ratio receives an exemption equal to **25 percent of the fair market value at the time of the transfer**, but in the statute's words the exemption **does not apply** unless the owner notifies the county assessor **before January 31** that the property will be subject to the 6 percent ratio. Whoever misses it loses **a quarter of the taxable value**.
- **There is no other relief for a working-age buyer.** The homestead exemption, which excludes the first **\$50,000** of the legal residence's fair market value, is for those 65 and over, totally and permanently disabled, legally blind, or the surviving spouse of a qualifying person, and it also requires **at least one year of South Carolina residency**. So even someone who arrives at 66 waits a year.

One reassuring sentence on taxes

On income tax there is good news: the state department of revenue cut the tax to **two brackets** for 2026. The department's own sentences: **for tax year 2026 the rate on income under \$30,000 is 1.99 percent**, and **for income of \$30,000 and above the rate is 5.21 percent minus \$966**; the detail sits in the department's **information letter 26-20**. On top of that, **research found no local income tax**: the department's individual income tax page describes only the state tax, and research found no municipal income tax or per-capita payroll tax. **We say "we found none", not "there is none"**, but we can say this: someone working here files **one state return** and deals with one rate schedule, and the city layer found in other states does not appear here, which is a real simplification. Two mechanics: **the state's own W-4 is a separate form from the federal W-4** and must be given to your employer; and the department's portal is **MyDORWAY**, in its words the preferred way to upload W-2 and 1099 forms, open a withholding account, file returns and pay. Rates change annually, so each January take the new rate, the new withholding tables and the new state W-4 from the

department's page. Tax records are frequently requested in green card and citizenship cases; keep a copy every year.

THE HEALTH GAP IS DEEP, AND TWO DATES BELONG ON YOUR CALENDAR

- **We state the gap plainly:** for a working-age adult without a disability, not pregnant, under 65 and with no dependent children, **there is no Medicaid category at any income level.** The threshold for a parent is **62 percent** of the poverty level, **\$824.60** a month in a one-person household (effective March 1, 2026); the marketplace premium tax credit begins at **100 percent** of the poverty level. **There is nothing in between:** too much income for Medicaid, too little for subsidies.
- One caveat: research found no text on the state's own pages using the words **"we did not expand"** or **"coverage gap."** The conclusion above comes from the agency's **published list of categories** and its **published income limits**; both are primary sources, but we read no official declaration.
- **We use careful language on status:** the criteria for every eligibility category the agency publishes carry the same sentence, that the applicant be **a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident alien.** So someone with refugee, asylee, parolee or temporary protected status does not fall into those categories. We write that not as a legal conclusion but as **a reading of the published criteria**; if you are in such a status, call **888-549-0820** and **ask for the answer in writing.**
- **October 1, 2026, Medicaid.** Federal law now makes **full federal Medicaid payment** to the state for only four groups: U.S. citizens and nationals, permanent resident card holders, Cuban and Haitian entrants, and people living here under a Compact of Free Association. **The list is closed; refugees, asylees and parolees are not on it.** Two things survive: **emergency Medicaid for everyone**, and coverage for lawfully residing pregnant people and those under 21, which is **left to the state's option.** **The law cuts the federal payment to the state, not the person's coverage**; the sentence "nothing is left" is not true. Source: [govinfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov), section 71109.
- **And we take no side on whether South Carolina uses that option.** What we write is this: **the state's published eligibility criteria do not cover lawfully residing pregnant people and children who are not permanent resident card holders.** Research could not reach the official record of the option, so **we do not say "the state declined"**; a family in that position should call the agency and get a **written answer.**
- **January 1, 2027, the marketplace.** **The state has no marketplace of its own**, so coverage is bought on the federal site (healthcare.gov, **1-800-318-2596**). From that date the premium tax credit narrows to **three statuses**: permanent resident card holder, Cuban or Haitian entrant, and Compact of Free Association migrant. Asylees, refugees, parolees, work permit holders, temporary protected status holders and **all non-immigrant visa categories** may keep buying a plan but **without subsidies**; **people with deferred action for childhood arrivals cannot enter marketplace coverage at all.**
- **What is left:** in an emergency a hospital must examine you and **stabilize** an emergency medical condition **without regard to** ability to pay, insurance status or immigration status. **But that is not free care**, a bill follows. The way to shrink that bill is **hospital financial assistance**, which is a **bill discount, not a clinic**, and you have to apply. For routine care the door is a **sliding fee health center**, and **a sliding fee is never free**: it is a discount based on income and household size and it requires an application and documents. **There is no such site inside Mount Pleasant**; the nearest ones are across the Cooper River.
- Put **annual renewal of your coverage** on your calendar; the state program requires you to reapply every year.

When you take a job: E-Verify is mandatory for every private employer

This section changes the whole conversation about looking for work, so we state it as it is. The statute requires **all private employers** required to maintain federal employment authorization verification forms to enroll and participate in the federal E-Verify program, and to verify **the work authorization of every new employee within three business days of hire**. Enforcement runs against the employer's license: every private employer is deemed by statute to hold a state employment license and may employ no one unless that license is in effect; penalties range from a three-month probationary reporting period to a **10 to 30 day license suspension**, on a second violation **30 to 60 days**, and on a third **revocation**. Until verification is complete the new employee is employed **provisionally**, and if authorization is not verified the employer may not employ, continue to employ or rehire that person. **The limit in the same section also matters to the reader:** in the statute's own words, **a state, county or local official may not attempt to independently determine whether an alien is authorized to work in the United States**; verification must go through the federal government. Both halves help you: an employer here will run E-Verify on you within three days, and **an employer who says "we do not do that here" is putting its own license at risk**.

The next sixty days

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Finish the license card inside 45 days	A South Carolina license or ID card sits first on the presumption list in the post-stop status check statute; this is the most concrete step after you move
☐ When you take insurance quotes, point out two provisions	Your ZIP code cannot be used in pricing (a territorial plan cannot be smaller than a county), and if you are not in the lowest tier you can ask for the reason in writing
☐ If you have no credit file, ask the regulator	The statute conflicts with itself: one section allows conditional use of the absence of credit information while another treats economic status as a prohibited criterion. Write through doi.sc.gov
☐ If you bought a home, set January 15 and January 31	January 15 for the 4 percent legal residence application; January 31, if the home will not be your residence, for the 6 percent notice and the 25 percent transfer exemption
☐ Call before you go to a sliding fee clinic	Two questions: which documents do I bring for the discount, and will the appointment still happen if a document is missing. If you will not use your insurance, ask for a good faith estimate
☐ If you have a document for use in Türkiye, start the apostille chain	The apostille comes from the secretary of state, not from the vital records agency; a foreign-language document requires a notarized English translation
☐ Open every official envelope that arrives	The jury pool here is filtered for citizenship at the source , but a data error can still produce a summons; call the clerk of court named in the letter. If you are not a citizen, write nothing on any voter registration form

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Know park prices before you plan	The state parks annual pass is \$99 and works per vehicle ; the county parks annual card is \$99 , \$84 for a county resident and \$69 for those over 60, plus tax

IN PARKS, GOOD NEWS AND A TRAP SIT SIDE BY SIDE

- **The one hundred dollar national park surcharge for nonresident visitors is not applied at any park in South Carolina.** The agency names the eleven parks where that fee applies and no park in this state is on the list. So while traveling in this state you never pay that item.
- **But the federal annual pass now has two prices:** the resident version is **\$80** and the **nonresident version is \$250**. The agency's own sentence is that all other annual pass versions are for U.S. citizens and residents only. So the only pass a visitor who is not a U.S. resident can buy is the **\$250** one. All annual passes are nonrefundable and nontransferable.
- **On fee-free days we take no side.** On the question of who those days cover, the agency's own pages carry **three different formulations**: in one place only U.S. citizens and permanent residents, in another U.S. citizens and residents, and in a third **everyone**. **What to do:** before you set out on a fee-free day, call the park you are going to and ask whether it is free for you that day. The remaining fee-free days in 2026 are **October 27, 2026** and **November 11, 2026**.
- **And there is a free federal site inside the flagship town:** the historic site at **1254 Long Point Road**, phone **843-577-0242**. Admission is free, parking is free, the loop trail is a quarter mile and therefore short for a small child, and most importantly: **even when the visitor center is closed, the grounds, trails, restrooms and water point are open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** So the trip is never wasted. **Watch an address mix-up:** the site's mailing address is on another island because it is managed together with a neighboring historic fort; **do not put that address into your navigation**.
- **The beaches are not free.** Three of the area's beach parks are **county parks** and charge admission; that is precisely why they are listed within the county's annual card. We did not research public beach access outside those parks, or the parking there, so we imply that no beach is free.
- We also could not read the admission prices of several known places in the area, and **we print no figure**. It is worth asking your own library and the museum you plan to visit whether a fee-free day or pass program exists.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across South Carolina, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669

Office: 321 N Central Expy, Ste 206, McKinney, TX 75070

Attorney responsible for this guide: Asim Clinch, Esq., Clinch Law Firm P.C. Attorney Asim Clinch is a member of the Missouri Bar (No. 76084) and practices U.S. federal immigration law.

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