



Research
Services

December 5, 2023

Dear Researchers:

I am writing to let you know about a process improvement the National Archives is making that will facilitate our ability to provide negative search letters to you and your clients. As you know, National Archives units across the country regularly conduct searches for naturalization records and if staff are unable to find any responsive records, they create a negative search letter at no charge.

The Federal government is transitioning to an electronic or "paperless" environment. You can read more about this initiative in [OMB Memorandum M-23-07](#) and [OMB Memorandum M-23-22](#).

The National Archives is now issuing negative search letters using electronic or digital signatures and can send these out via email as pdf attachments on NARA letterhead. Due to the volume of requests received for negative search letters, the use of an electronic or digital signature significantly expedites our ability to respond to researcher requests.

Federal law has encouraged the transition to electronic signatures. The [Government Paperwork Elimination Act 44 U. S.C. § 3504](#) states that electronic signatures must not be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability because such records are in electronic form. [OMB Circular No. A-130](#) states that agencies should promote the use of electronic signatures by establishing legal equivalence between pen-and-ink signatures and electronic signatures.

For your purposes, if you or your clients need to submit a paper copy of the negative search letter, you may simply print out the electronic letter we have provided. In addition, the Department of State has confirmed they will accept a printout for apostille purposes.

Please feel free to share this information with your staff and clients. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

CHRIS
NAYLOR

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Chris Naylor
Executive for Research Services
National Archives and Records Administration