

## Fairfield woman's citizenship quest takes better turn

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### Document Text

When you first hear the tale of Fairfield's Anke d'Hane Davis' dealings with the Department of Homeland Security, it's easy to assume the case is a prime example of a federal government that is too big and mismanaged to work in a meaningful way.

One day shy of her 65th birthday, Davis, who moved to Montana from Holland when she was 4, was the 2008 Montana Rural Teacher of the Year and is a beloved teacher at Greenfield Elementary School, is married, a homeowner and registered voter, applied for Medicare supplemental health insurance.

When her card didn't arrive in the mail, she called the Helena Medicare office to find out what the holdup was. The answer was stunning. Davis' U.S. citizenship, it turns out, is in question. Her parents became naturalized citizens when she was a child, but apparently Davis did not.

The possible reasons why are longer than her 60-plus years as a Montana resident.

Understandably, Davis is upset. There's no question that she's been a tax-paying, contributing member of her community her entire life. However questions about her citizenship could ultimately mean that she's ineligible to collect Medicare and other benefits or vote for up to five years, not something any 65-year-old really wants to hear. In theory, she could be deported, although no one involved believes that is a real possibility.

Exacerbating her frustration is that every time Davis calls the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ?the division of the Department of Homeland Security handling citizenship issues ?she talks to a different person. Without a single staff member overseeing her case, Davis is forced to explain the entire thing over again. It's a situation that would make the blood boil in even the most patient among us. We don't know Anke Davis very well, but we suspect good natured, adaptable and patient are common attributes among Montana Rural Teacher of the Year award recipients.

Turns out Davis' situation isn't all that unusual, according to Shahid Haque-Hausrath, a Helena attorney specializing in immigration and naturalization.

"Immigration laws are very complex," he said. "I've dealt with several people of Canadian descent where one of their parents was an American citizen and one of their parents Canadian; they always assumed they were U.S. citizens because they had grown up here. But there are specific conditions that need to be met to become a U.S. citizen, even when one of their parents was born in the U.S."

The story of Davis' journey to affirming her U.S. citizenship isn't finished, but after it was initially told in the Tribune on Wednesday, a welcome chapter was added.

Not one but two U.S. Department of Homeland employees who work in Montana called Tribune Staff Writer David Murray to say they will help Davis ?in person ?wade through her current documents and paperwork and find out what, if any, additional items she might need.

USCIS employees, who are overloaded with inquires, might not have the time to offer individual assistance, the Montana-based agents theorized.

It's a frustrating situation for Davis. And we agree with her that the rules and regulations the Department of Homeland Security is charged with enforcing when it comes to determining her citizenship seem to defy all logic.

But it is heartening to know that there are members of that agency willing to do to what they can to help.

And it's no surprise to us that they are based right here in Montana.

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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