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Visa Facilitation for Business Travelers

The Department of State is committed to facilitating tourist and business travel to the United States. We are aware of the tremendous contribution that international visitors bring to the United States, their level of spending, the number of U.S. jobs they support, and the better understanding of U.S. culture and values they bring away with them when they leave.

- The Department of State issued 6.4 million non-immigrant visas in fiscal year 2010.
- In collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, we added eight new countries to the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in 2008, and one in 2009, bringing up the total to 36 for the number of countries whose nationals can enter the United States without a visa for business or tourist travel for up to 90 days. 14 million tourists and 2 million business travelers came to the United States under VWP in fiscal year 2009.
- All U.S. embassies and consulates have established procedures to expedite applications for business travelers. U.S. officials work closely with American Chambers of Commerce in more than 100 countries to streamline the visa process for legitimate business travelers.
- At most of our 222 overseas visa posts, applicants face a waiting time of seven working days or less to receive an appointment for a visa interview
- Our Business Visa Center facilitates visa application procedures for U.S. companies and convention organizers expecting a large number of foreign visitors. The Center handled more than 3,100 requests in the 2010 fiscal year. Based on feedback from users, the Center continuously seeks to identify the needs of the business community (see travel.state.gov, e-mail businessvisa@state.gov, or call 202-663-3198 for more information).

We want qualified applicants to receive their visas quickly. The Bureau of Consular Affairs has enhanced the efficiency, predictability, and transparency of the visa process to facilitate international travel.

More than 97 percent of all visa applicants who are interviewed and approved receive their visa within a few days. For the less than three percent of visa applicants who require additional processing, the Department continues to look for improvements to minimize delays. We are using the latest technology to speed the adjudication process including:

- Using online appointment booking and electronic visa applications as a means of streamlining the process and increasing the number of applicants consular staff can interview daily
- Providing information on appointment wait times online at <http://www.travel.state.gov>
- Utilizing the Petition Information Management Service, which moves petition data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to U.S. embassies and consulates; thereby, reducing our reliance on paper forms.

