

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5233

To amend the Passport Act of June 4, 1920, to make certain improvements with respect to expenditure and other authorities, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 18, 2023

Mr. CARTER of Georgia (for himself, Mrs. CHAVEZ-DEREMER, Ms. LEE of Nevada, Mr. MILLER of Ohio, Mr. MILLS, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. NUNN of Iowa, Ms. SALAZAR, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. TITUS, and Mr. WEBSTER of Florida) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To amend the Passport Act of June 4, 1920, to make certain improvements with respect to expenditure and other authorities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act, the following definitions apply:

5 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
6 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
7 mittees” means the Committee on Foreign Relations

1 of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs
2 of the House of Representatives.

3 (2) DEPARTMENT.—The term “Department”
4 means the Department of State.

5 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
6 the Secretary of State.

7 **SEC. 2. PASSPORT FEE EXPENDITURE AUTHORITY EXTEN-**
8 **SION.**

9 (a) WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE
10 FEE.—To make permanent the Western Hemisphere
11 Travel Initiative fee, section 1(b) of the Passport Act of
12 June 4, 1920, (22 U.S.C. 214(b)(1)) is amended—

13 (1) in paragraph (1), by striking “(1)”; and

14 (2) by striking paragraphs (2) and (3).

15 (b) PASSPORT FEES.—Section 1(b) of the Passport
16 Act of June 4, 1920, as amended by subsection (a), shall
17 be applied through fiscal year 2028 by striking “such
18 costs” and inserting “the costs of providing consular serv-
19 ices”.

20 (c) MODERNIZATION OF PASSPORT PROCESSING.—A
21 portion of the expanded expenditure authorities provided
22 in subsections (a) and (b) shall be used—

23 (1) to modernize consular systems, with an em-
24 phasis on passport and citizenship services; and

1 much of passport revenues the Department is spend-
2 ing on consular systems modernization;

3 (4) the demand for urgent passport services by
4 major metropolitan area;

5 (5) the steps that have been taken by the De-
6 partment to reduce and meet the demand for urgent
7 passport services, particularly in areas that are
8 greater than 5 hours driving time from the nearest
9 passport agency; and

10 (6) how the Department details its staff and re-
11 sources to passport services programs.

12 **SEC. 5. PASSPORT TRAVEL ADVISORIES.**

13 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
14 ment of this Act, the Department shall make prominently
15 available in United States regular passports, on the first
16 3 pages of the passport, the following information:

17 (1) A prominent, clear advisory for all travelers
18 to check travel.state.gov for updated travel warnings
19 and advisories.

20 (2) A prominent, clear notice urging all trav-
21 elers to register with the Department prior to over-
22 seas travel.

23 (3) A prominent, clear advisory—

1 (A) noting that many countries deny entry
2 to travelers during the last 6 months of their
3 passport validity period; and

4 (B) urging all travelers to renew their
5 passport not later than 1 year prior to its expi-
6 ration.

7 **SEC. 6. STRATEGY TO ENSURE ACCESS TO PASSPORT SERV-**
8 **ICES FOR ALL AMERICANS.**

9 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
10 ment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit a strategy
11 to the appropriate congressional committees, the Com-
12 mittee on Appropriations of the Senate, and the Com-
13 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives
14 for ensuring reasonable access to passport services for all
15 Americans, which shall include—

16 (1) a detailed strategy describing how the De-
17 partment could—

18 (A) by not later than 1 year after submis-
19 sion of the strategy, reduce passport processing
20 times to an acceptable average for renewals and
21 for expedited service; and

22 (B) by not later than 2 years after the
23 submission of the strategy, provide United
24 States residents living in a significant popu-
25 lation center more than a 5-hour drive from a

1 passport agency with urgent, in-person passport
2 services, including the possibility of building
3 new passport agencies; and

4 (2) a description of the specific resources re-
5 quired to implement the strategy.

6 **SEC. 7. STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL PASSPORT INFOR-**
7 **MATION CENTER.**

8 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
9 gress that passport wait times since 2021 have been unac-
10 ceptably long and have created frustration among those
11 seeking to obtain or renew passports.

12 (b) ONLINE CHAT FEATURE.—The Department
13 should develop an online tool with the capability for cus-
14 tomers to correspond with customer service representa-
15 tives regarding questions and updates pertaining to their
16 application for a passport or for the renewal of a passport.

17 (c) GAO REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the
18 date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General
19 of the United States shall initiate a review of NPIC oper-
20 ations, which shall include an analysis of the extent to
21 which NPIC—

22 (1) responds to constituent inquiries by tele-
23 phone, including how long constituents are kept on
24 hold and their ability to be placed in a queue;

25 (2) provides personalized customer service;

1 (2) the estimated wait time remaining in the
2 passport application process.

3 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date
4 of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary of
5 State for Consular Affairs shall submit a report to the
6 appropriate congressional committees that outlines a plan
7 for coordinated comprehensive public outreach to increase
8 public awareness and understanding of—

9 (1) the online status tool required under sub-
10 section (a);

11 (2) passport travel advisories required under
12 section 4; and

13 (3) passport wait times.

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