

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5817

To expand and codify a pilot program to provide notification of expiration of passports, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

Mr. SCHIFF (for himself and Mr. LIEU) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To expand and codify a pilot program to provide notification of expiration of passports, 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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Passport Application,
5 Staffing, and Service Process Optimization Reform and
6 Transparency Act” or the “PASSPORT Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

9 (1) Providing passport services is a vital func-
10 tion of the United States Government that affects

1 the lives, plans, and finances of millions of Ameri-
2 cans. Congress has vested authority in the State De-
3 partment to grant, issue, and verify United States
4 passports.

5 (2) The number of passports the Department of
6 State issues on an annual basis has increased sub-
7 stantially since the mid-1990s, with the Depart-
8 ment’s Bureau of Consular Affairs issuing a record
9 21,900,000 passports in fiscal year 2022, nearly
10 quadruple the 5,500,000 passports issued in fiscal
11 year 1996. The Department of State expects to set
12 a new record in fiscal year 2023 amid what Sec-
13 retary of State Antony Blinken said was “unprece-
14 dented demand”, with the Department receiving 30
15 percent to 40 percent more passport applications
16 weekly than in 2022.

17 (3) In 2023, a number of factors led to a surge
18 in passport applications and delays in processing—
19 including pent-up demand for passports among the
20 American public following the relaxing of COVID–
21 19-related international travel restriction, complica-
22 tions with the limited release of the online passport
23 renewal process, attrition within the passport adju-
24 dication workforce following the onset of the
25 COVID–19 pandemic and continued in-person work

1 required, and growth in the percentage of American
2 citizens who possess a passport.

3 (4) The Department of State's published proc-
4 essing times for routine passport applications in-
5 creased from 6 to 9 weeks in January 2023 to 10
6 to 13 weeks by March 2023, and for expedited pass-
7 port applications increased from 3 to 5 weeks to 7
8 to 9 weeks in the same time frame.

9 (5) In July 2023, the Department of State indi-
10 cated it was working to return processing times to
11 pre-pandemic levels, which as of December 2019
12 were 6 to 8 weeks for routine applications and 2 to
13 3 weeks for expedited applications, by the end of the
14 calendar year. However, the published processing
15 times have not decreased as of September 2023.

16 (6) The passports backlog and lengthier, unpre-
17 dictable processing times has significantly impacted
18 United States citizens. The delays have caused
19 United States citizens to miss international travel
20 for important events such as weddings, funerals,
21 family reunions, and long-awaited vacations, and op-
22 portunities to work and study abroad. The backlogs
23 have also imposed undue stress and additional costs
24 on constituents, with unpredictable timelines forcing
25 United States citizens to cancel and reschedule trav-

1 el, pay for expedited services, or miss out on once-
2 in-a-lifetime events. A disproportionate percentage of
3 constituent service caseloads now focus on passport
4 issues.

5 (7) Congressional action is needed to ensure
6 continued improvements in passport processing
7 times and communication with United States citi-
8 zens on these matters.

9 **SEC. 3. PLAN TO EXPAND AND CODIFY PILOT PROGRAM TO**
10 **PROVIDE NOTIFICATION OF EXPIRATION OF**
11 **PASSPORTS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
13 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State
14 shall submit to Congress a report that—

15 (1) updates Congress on the progress in imple-
16 menting the pilot program described on the trav-
17 el.state.gov website to notify United States passport
18 holders 6 months before their passports are set to
19 expire;

20 (2) contains a plan to expand the Department
21 of State’s pilot program to provide notification to all
22 holders of United States passports of the upcoming
23 expiration of each such passport by not later than
24 the date that is one year prior to the date of the ex-
25 piration of the passport; and

1 (3) contains a plan to codify the pilot program,
2 including proposals for legislation if necessary.

3 (b) FORM OF NOTIFICATION.—The notification
4 under the pilot program described in subsection (a)—

5 (1) shall be provided through electronic mail (e-
6 mail), Short Message/Messaging Service (SMS), or
7 other electronic means as appropriate; and

8 (2) may be provided through regular United
9 States mail in cases in which the e-mail or phone
10 number of holders of United States passports is not
11 available.

12 (c) OPT OUT.—The pilot program described in sub-
13 section (a) shall allow for passport holders to opt out of
14 receiving notifications under the program.

15 **SEC. 4. INFORMATION RELATING TO USE OF AND APPLICA-**
16 **TION PROCESS FOR PASSPORTS AT THE TIME**
17 **OF BOOKING INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO**
18 **OR FROM THE UNITED STATES.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in coordi-
20 nation with the Secretary of Transportation, shall coordi-
21 nate with airlines and airline ticket booking companies
22 serving the United States and offering international
23 flights to or from the United States to provide information
24 relating to use of passports, including the minimum length
25 of passport validity required to enter the destination coun-

1 try, and the application process for passports to customers
2 at the time of booking an international flight to or from
3 the United States.

4 (b) FORM OF INFORMATION.—The information re-
5 quired by subsection (a) should be provided through elec-
6 tronic mail (e-mail), Pop-up ads or Pop-ups, directed links
7 on the airline’s website, or other electronic means as ap-
8 propriate and include a mechanism for users to acknowl-
9 edge they have read the information before the transaction
10 can be completed.

11 **SEC. 5. PLAN TO IMPROVE TRACKING OF PROOF OF CITI-**
12 **ZENSHIP DOCUMENTS.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State shall de-
14 velop a plan to provide greater transparency and improved
15 tracking of documents to provide evidence of United
16 States citizenship and proof of identity for purposes of the
17 application process for United States passports.

18 (b) REQUIREMENTS.—The plan required by sub-
19 section (a)—

20 (1) should ensure that documents described in
21 such subsection are returned to applicants using a
22 trackable delivery service, which could include pro-
23 viding applicants the option to pay a fee for shipping
24 via UPS, Priority Mail, or another method that pro-
25 vides for tracking of the documents, and ensuring

1 that applicants are informed of the relevant tracking
2 number or numbers; and

3 (2) shall include information on the trav-
4 el.state.gov website describing options that are avail-
5 able to applicants whose documents described in
6 such subsection are lost in the application process.

7 (c) REIMBURSEMENT.—The plan required by sub-
8 section (a) shall provide for reimbursement of the full cost
9 of replacement to the applicant of any of the applicant’s
10 documents described in such subsection that are lost by
11 the Department of State in the application process.

12 **SEC. 6. GAO STUDY.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the
14 United States shall prepare an update to its July 2008
15 study entitled “State Department: Comprehensive Strat-
16 egy Needed to Improve Passport Operations” (GAO–08–
17 891).

18 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The study re-
19 quired by subsection (a) shall include a review of the oper-
20 ations of lockbox facilities operated by financial agents of
21 the Department of the Treasury that are responsible for
22 opening and sorting passport application packages,
23 verifying the completeness of the packages, processing
24 payments, and batching the applications, further includ-
25 ing—

1 (1) information on the volume and average
2 times for processing applications for United States
3 passports at the lockbox facilities;

4 (2) an assessment of communication between
5 the Department of State and such facilities;

6 (3) identification of any areas for improvements
7 and increased efficiencies; and

8 (4) a description of how the Department of
9 State and lockbox facilities are planning to shift re-
10 sponsibilities for processing of documents used in
11 the application system for United States passports
12 under an online passport application system.

13 (c) **ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.**—The
14 study required by subsection (a) shall also include a review
15 of the Department of State’s efforts to estimate and adapt
16 to periods of peak demand for passport services, as well
17 as information on any additional topics that the Comp-
18 troller General determines are relevant to improving pass-
19 port operations.

20 **SEC. 7. PASSPORT OPERATIONS STAFFING AND PASSPORT**
21 **EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

22 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State should
23 brief Congress on the current staffing levels for employees
24 supporting passport operations and make any rec-
25 ommendations regarding the provision of additional com-

1 pensionation to employees that have made outstanding con-
2 tributions to decreasing backlogs in the processing appli-
3 cations for United States passports.

4 (b) CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS.—The Sec-
5 retary of State should consult with Congress on any addi-
6 tional authorities that may be needed to—

7 (1) provide appropriate incentives and recogni-
8 tion to recruit and retain Department of State em-
9 ployees involved in processing applications for
10 United States passports; and

11 (2) encourage more overtime of such employees
12 until backlogs in processing applications for such
13 passports are reduced.

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