Bureau of Consular Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Changes to U.S. Passport Requirement

Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)

Fact Sheet

Background

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 requires the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State to develop and implement a plan to require all travelers, U.S. citizens and foreign nationals alike, to present a passport or other document, or a combination of documents, that denote identity and citizenship when entering the United States. Congress amended portions of the Act in 2006. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative is the Administration's proposed plan to implement this mandate.

The Goal of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI)

The goal of the Initiative is to strengthen border security and facilitate entry into the United States for U.S. citizens and legitimate foreign visitors by providing standardized, secure and reliable documentation which will allow the Department of Homeland Security to quickly, reliably and accurately identify a traveler.

Travel Documents for U.S. Citizens Under WHTI

Under the proposed implementation plan, the following documents will be acceptable to fulfill document requirements:

- U.S. Passport: U.S. citizens may present a valid U.S. passport when traveling via air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda, and may also use a U.S. passport when traveling via sea and land borders (including ferry crossings).
- The Passport Card (also referred to as the PASS Card): This limited use passport in card format is currently under development and will be available for use for travel only via land or sea (including ferries) between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. Similar in size to a credit card, it will fit easily into a wallet.
- DOS and DHS also anticipate that the following documents will continue to be acceptable for their current travel uses under WHTI: SENTRI, NEXUS, FAST, and the U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document. As proposed, members of the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty traveling on orders will continue to be exempt from the passport requirement.

Time Line

In the proposed implementation plan, the requirements outlined above will be rolled out in the following phases:

- On **January 23, 2007**, U.S. citizens traveling by **air** between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will be required to present a valid U.S. passport, Air NEXUS card, or U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document.
- As early as January 1, 2008, U.S. citizens traveling between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda by **land** or **sea** (including ferries), may be required to present a valid U.S. passport or other documents as determined by the Department of Homeland Security. While recent legislative changes permit a later deadline, the Departments of State and Homeland Security are working to meet all requirements as soon as possible. Ample advance notice will be provided to enable the public to obtain passports or passport cards for land/sea entries.

Travel Between the United States and U.S. Territories

WHTI will not affect travel between the United States and its territories. U.S. citizens traveling directly between the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa will continue to be able to use established forms of identification to board flights and for entry.

Applying for a U.S. Passport

U.S. citizens can visit the State Department's travel website at *travel.state.gov*, or call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778; TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793 for information about applying for a passport.