



NEWS RELEASE

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Visa Waiver Pilot Program Extension to End on February 2, 2001

Visa Waiver Pilot Program (VWPP) interim parole measures have been temporarily extended through February 2, 2001, to provide Congress the opportunity to consider legislation regarding the future of the program. In the meantime, VWPP-like procedures, specifically designed to cause minimal disruption to travelers, are in use at U.S. ports of entry.

Since May 1, when the program officially expired, INS has continued to facilitate the inspection of the travelers who would have been covered under the VWPP. However, there no longer exists the legal authority to continue this effort. Because travel plans are often booked far in advance and the holiday season is rapidly approaching, INS has taken the step to allow its interim measures to continue through February 2, 2001.

Should Congress and the President fail to enact legislation that would re-authorize the program, all nationals covered under the VWPP will have to obtain a visa from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate before traveling to the United States after February 2, 2001.

Background

The VWPP, begun in 1988, permitted nationals from designated countries, who are not prohibited by U.S. law from entering the United States, to visit the United States for business or pleasure for up to 90 days without obtaining a nonimmigrant visitor visa. The 29 VWPP designated countries were:

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom, Portugal, Singapore, Uruguay.

The United States chose nations to participate in the program on the basis of a low visa refusal rate and a determination that nationals of those countries generally pose no threat to the health, safety, welfare or security of the United States.