

Global Immigration alert

February 2025

United States

U.S. Department of State announces changes to nonimmigrant visa interview waiver policy

Executive summary

Over the course of the past week, consular posts around the world began applying, effective immediately, new criteria for nonimmigrant visa applicants seeking a waiver of the in-person interview requirement for visa renewals, informing applicants who had already secured a waiver that they were now required to schedule an in-person appointment.

On 18 February 2025, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) formalized this change in policy, announcing an update to the categories of applicants that may seek an interview waiver.

Background and analysis

In December 2023, DOS identified certain categories of interview waivers to be in the national interest and provided consular officers with the authority and discretion to waive the in-person interview requirement for, among others, nonimmigrant visa applicants applying for any type of nonimmigrant visa, provided that they were previously issued a nonimmigrant visa in any classification (excluding those who had only been issued a B visitor visa in the past) and were applying within 48 months of the expiration date of their most recent nonimmigrant visa.

The new policy, which supersedes that announced in December 2023, restricts the pool of potentially eligible applicants to those who previously held a visa in the same category that expired less than 12 months prior to the new application. Furthermore, an applicant may only request an interview waiver if they are applying in their country of nationality or residence, have never been refused a visa

(unless that refusal was overcome or waived), and have no apparent or potential ineligibility.

What this means

Nonimmigrant visa applicants can expect that these changes will increase the appointment wait times for those who are ineligible for an interview waiver. This will make advance planning critical to reduce the impact of visa renewals on international travel.

We will continue to monitor and review future developments. For additional information, or if you wish to discuss this further, please contact your EY Law LLP professional or Mehlman Jacobs LLP professional.

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