



U.S. State Department Ends Broad Interview Waivers for Visa Applicants

Aug 04, 2025

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Authors:

[Elizabeth \(Liz\) La Rocca](#)

[Alicia M. Visse-Kroger](#)

On July 25, 2025, the U.S. Department of State [announced](#) a significant policy change regarding nonimmigrant visa processing. This change will be felt worldwide as it impacts most visa applicants. Effective September 2, 2025, visa applicants will be required to attend in-person interviews at U.S. embassies and consulates, reversing the broad interview waiver policies introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impetus for the change, according to the State Department, is a return to pre-pandemic norms and a desire to enhance national security and fraud prevention. With global operations stabilizing, the State Department is reasserting more rigorous screening procedures.

The September change effectively ends “dropbox” eligibility for most nonimmigrant visa categories, regardless of prior visa history. Under the new rules, the vast majority of visa applicants, including those applying for H-1B, H-4, L-1, and L-2 visas, must now attend in-person interviews at a U.S. consulate abroad. Interview waivers will remain available only for diplomats, foreign officials, and a limited number of B visa applicants.

The State Department has not yet clarified how existing dropbox appointments scheduled on or after September 2, 2025, will be handled. We have outlined below important considerations and next steps for visa applicants.

- Because individual U.S. consulates are expected to implement their own procedures, applicants should regularly check their appointment status for updates or potential cancellations.
- If visa appointment wait times become excessive, applicants may request an expedited appointment, though procedures vary by consulate.
- Additionally, if an applicant is unable to secure a visa appointment in their home country, they may consider applying in another country with shorter wait times. However, doing so as a “third-country national” may result in lower

prioritization, longer processing times, and a higher likelihood of administrative processing.

- Visa applicants must prepare carefully for the consular interview and have all relevant documentation ready to present at their appointment.

The shift in policy will affect foreign nationals as well as U.S. businesses. There will be increased visa appointment wait times, especially in countries with high-demand locations. This will certainly cause business disruptions, particularly for renewals that no longer qualify for waivers, impacting project timelines and international assignments. HR departments must adjust timelines and expectations related to visa renewals, especially for complex cases or those with prior visa refusals. Companies need to inform staff, revise planning, and in some instances revise their immigration strategies.

Given the anticipated increase in demand for interview appointments and the stricter eligibility for interview waivers, early preparation and coordination with the appropriate consulate will be critical. To stay compliant and minimize travel disruption, it is best to stay informed, plan early, and consult with a qualified immigration attorney.

If you have questions about eligibility or travel timing, contact Frost Brown Todd's [Immigration Team](#).

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