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GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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United States – Department of State Visa Bonds and Interview Waiver Update

On August 5, 2025, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) issued a Temporary Final Rule introducing a 12-month visa bond pilot program[1]. Effective August 20, 2025, nationals from countries identified as having high visa over-stay rates, insufficient screening procedures, and offering citizenship-by-investment programs may be required to post a visa bond. The bond amounts can be $5,000, $10,000, or $15,000 depending on individual circumstances, and will serve as a prerequisite for B1/B2 visa issuance.

As of this publication, the DOS website has identified two countries that will be subject to visa bonds: Zambia and Malawi[2]. Visa applicants will not be able to apply for a waiver of the bond requirement. However, consular officers may recommend a waiver if they determine that there is an urgent humanitarian need for an individual to secure a B1/B2 visa.

Similarly to the Visa Integrity Fee (see *GMS Flash Alert* 2025-139), according to the DOS, the goal of this policy is to promote visa compliance. The program is set to conclude on August 5, 2026.

On July 25, 2025, the DOS announced that it would begin restricting eligibility for visa interview waivers as of September 2, 2025.[3] It also highlighted that there would no longer be a blanket waiver of the visa interview for children under 14 and adults over 79, unless they meet certain conditions.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Foreign nationals planning to travel to the United States should remain cognizant of the increasing costs and additional steps recently imposed associated with U.S. travel and the conditions required to renew a visa. Visa compliance has been an ongoing concern, with heightened emphasis placed on fostering adherence to immigration laws and requirements.

Visa Bond Background

The Visa Bond pilot program was initially introduced in 2020, but was not implemented due to the reduction in travel resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, the U.S. government has introduced several initiatives targeting visa compliance aimed to hold foreign governments accountable for their own screening practices. The Visa Bond program follows the Visa Integrity Fee of $250 introduced in the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* (OBBBA) for nonimmigrant visa applications. The Visa Bond pilot program imposes a significant burden to a B1/B2 visa applicant, given that it can reach up to $15,000 based on the consular officer's determination. Affected applicants must also submit Form I-352 agreeing to the terms of the bond and post payment through the U.S. Department of the Treasury's website.

Designated Ports of Entry for Visa Bond Participants

Countries that are subject to the visa-bond requirements must enter and depart the U.S. through one of the following designated international airports:

- Boston Logan International Airport (BOS);
- John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York;
- Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD).

Bond Cancellation and Breach

According to the DOS announcement[4], the bond money will be returned to the applicant once the visa holder:

- departs the U.S. on or before the date he or she is authorized to remain in the U.S.; or
- does not travel to the U.S.; or
- is denied admission at the U.S. port of entry.

If the visa holder violates the conditions of his or her visa or applies to adjust status (including asylum claims), the bond deposit will be considered forfeited. While the detailed process for the return of the bond remains uncertain, the DOS has indicated that the applicant will receive the full bond amount along with a "Notice – Immigration Bond Cancelled" (Form I-391) once the conditions of the bond agreement have been fulfilled, based on the information reported through the Arrival and Departure Information System (ADIS).

Alternatively, an applicant may pursue a manual cancellation of the bond by requesting an appointment with a consular officer at a U.S. consulate abroad within 30 days of his/her departure. The consular officer will approve the appointment if he or she determines that the applicant's departure was not recorded in ADIS.

Update to Department of State's Waiver of Non-Immigrant Visa Interviews

The Department of State announced that as of September 2, 2025, there will be a change to those foreign nationals eligible for a waiver of their non-immigrant visa interview.[5] All foreign nationals, even those under 14 and over 79 years old, will require a visa interview with a consular officer, except for those that fall under the following categories:

- Applicants classifiable under the visa symbols A-1, A-2, C-3 (except attendants, servants, or personal employees of accredited officials), G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, NATO-1 through NATO-6, or TECRO E-1;
- Applicants for diplomatic- or official-type visas; and
- Applicants renewing full validity B-1, B-2, B1/B2 visa, or a Border Crossing Card/Foil (for Mexican nationals) within 12 months of the prior visa's expiration, and who were at least 18 years old at the time of the prior visa's issuance – specifically, these applicants must:
    - apply in their country of nationality or residence;

- have never been refused a visa (unless such renewal was overcome or waived); and
- have no apparent or potential ineligibility.

Nota Bene: Consular officers maintain the discretion to require in-person interviews on a case-by-case basis for any reason.

KPMG LAW LLP INSIGHTS

The new bonds and the tightening of visa interview waiver eligibility align with the current administration's broader goal of enhancing border security and discouraging non-compliance with terms of authorized stay in the United States.

Individuals – and the employers for which they are taking international travel into the U.S. – who may be concerned with the added difficulties in traveling to the U.S. due to the new bond requirements and/or restrictive interview waiver requirements, are encouraged to connect with an attorney to discuss further.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See *Federal Register* (online), "Visas: Visa Bond Pilot Program," a Rule by the State Department on 08/05/2025.

2 See DOS, "Countries Subject to Visa Bonds," (Last Updated: August 5, 2025).

3 See DOS, "Interview Waiver Update July 25, 2025."

4 See DOS, "Countries Subject to Visa Bonds," (Last updated on August 5, 2025).

5 See DOS, "Interview Waiver Update July 25, 2025."

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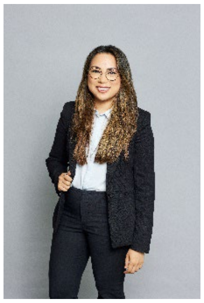
Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada:



Laura Wong
Manager, U.S. Immigration
KPMG Law LLP – Tax + Immigration, Canada
Tel. +1 416-468-7166
Laurawong1@kpmg.ca

Alexander Tolic
Manager, U.S. Immigration
KPMG Law LLP – Tax + Immigration, Canada
Tel: +1 416-468-7553
atolic@kpmg.ca

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