



(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To expand and codify a pilot program to provide notification of expiration of passports, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. SCHIFF introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To expand and codify a pilot program to provide notification of expiration of passports, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Passport Application,
5 Staffing, and Service Process Optimization Reform and
6 Transparency Act” or the “PASSPORT Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Providing passport services is a vital func-
2 tion of the United States Government that affects
3 the lives, plans, and finances of millions of Ameri-
4 cans. Congress has vested authority in the State De-
5 partment to grant, issue, and verify United States
6 passports.

7 (2) The number of passports the Department of
8 State issues on an annual basis has increased sub-
9 stantially since the mid-1990s, with the Depart-
10 ment’s Bureau of Consular Affairs issuing a record
11 21,900,000 passports in fiscal year 2022, nearly
12 quadruple the 5,500,000 passports issued in fiscal
13 year 1996. The Department of State expects to set
14 a new record in fiscal year 2023 amid what Sec-
15 retary of State Antony Blinken said was “unprece-
16 dented demand”, with the Department receiving 30
17 percent to 40 percent more passport applications
18 weekly than in 2022.

19 (3) In 2023, a number of factors led to a surge
20 in passport applications and delays in processing—in-
21 cluding pent-up demand for passports among the
22 American public following the relaxing of COVID–
23 19-related international travel restriction, complica-
24 tions with the limited release of the online passport
25 renewal process, attrition within the passport adju-

1 dication workforce following the onset of the
2 COVID–19 pandemic and continued in-person work
3 required, and growth in the percentage of American
4 citizens who possess a passport.

5 (4) The Department of State’s published proe-
6 cessing times for routine passport applications in-
7 creased from 6 to 9 weeks in January 2023 to 10
8 to 13 weeks by March 2023, and for expedited pass-
9 port applications increased from 3 to 5 weeks to 7
10 to 9 weeks in the same time frame.

11 (5) In July 2023, the Department of State indi-
12 cated it was working to return processing times to
13 pre-pandemic levels, which as of December 2019
14 were 6 to 8 weeks for routine applications and 2 to
15 3 weeks for expedited applications, by the end of the
16 calendar year. However, the published processing
17 times have not decreased as of September 2023.

18 (6) The passports backlog and lengthier, unpre-
19 dictable processing times has significantly impacted
20 United States citizens. The delays have caused
21 United States citizens to miss international travel
22 for important events such as weddings, funerals,
23 family reunions, and long-awaited vacations, and op-
24 portunities to work and study abroad. The backlogs
25 have also imposed undue stress and additional costs

1 on constituents, with unpredictable timelines forcing
2 United States citizens to cancel and reschedule trav-
3 el, pay for expedited services, or miss out on once-
4 in-a-lifetime events. A disproportionate percentage of
5 constituent service caseloads now focus on passport
6 issues.

7 (7) Congressional action is needed to ensure
8 continued improvements in passport processing
9 times and communication with United States citi-
10 zens on these matters.

11 **SEC. 3. PLAN TO EXPAND AND CODIFY PILOT PROGRAM TO**
12 **PROVIDE NOTIFICATION OF EXPIRATION OF**
13 **PASSPORTS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
15 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State
16 shall submit to Congress a report that—

17 (1) updates Congress on the progress in imple-
18 menting the pilot program described on the trav-
19 el.state.gov website to notify United States passport
20 holders 6 months before their passports are set to
21 expire;

22 (2) contains a plan to expand the Department
23 of State’s pilot program to provide notification to all
24 holders of United States passports of the upcoming
25 expiration of each such passport by not later than

1 the date that is one year prior to the date of the ex-
2 piration of the passport; and

3 (3) contains a plan to codify the pilot program,
4 including proposals for legislation if necessary.

5 (b) FORM OF NOTIFICATION.—The notification
6 under the pilot program described in subsection (a)—

7 (1) shall be provided through electronic mail (e-
8 mail), Short Message/Messaging Service (SMS), or
9 other electronic means as appropriate; and

10 (2) may be provided through regular United
11 States mail in cases in which the e-mail or phone
12 number of holders of United States passports is not
13 available.

14 (c) OPT OUT.—The pilot program described in sub-
15 section (a) shall allow for passport holders to opt out of
16 receiving notifications under the program.

17 **SEC. 4. INFORMATION RELATING TO USE OF AND APPLICA-**
18 **TION PROCESS FOR PASSPORTS AT THE TIME**
19 **OF BOOKING INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO**
20 **OR FROM THE UNITED STATES.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State, in coordi-
22 nation with the Secretary of Transportation, shall coordi-
23 nate with airlines and airline ticket booking companies
24 serving the United States and offering international
25 flights to or from the United States to provide information

1 relating to use of passports, including the minimum length
2 of passport validity required to enter the destination coun-
3 try, and the application process for passports to customers
4 at the time of booking an international flight to or from
5 the United States.

6 (b) **FORM OF INFORMATION.**—The information re-
7 quired by subsection (a) should be provided through elec-
8 tronic mail (e-mail), Pop-up ads or Pop-ups, directed links
9 on the airline’s website, or other electronic means as ap-
10 propriate and include a mechanism for users to acknowl-
11 edge they have read the information before the transaction
12 can be completed.

13 **SEC. 5. PLAN TO IMPROVE TRACKING OF PROOF OF CITI-**
14 **ZENSHIP DOCUMENTS.**

15 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State shall de-
16 velop a plan to provide greater transparency and improved
17 tracking of documents to provide evidence of United
18 States citizenship and proof of identity for purposes of the
19 application process for United States passports.

20 (b) **REQUIREMENTS.**—The plan required by sub-
21 section (a)—

22 (1) should ensure that documents described in
23 such subsection are returned to applicants using a
24 trackable delivery service, which could include pro-
25 viding applicants the option to pay a fee for shipping

1 via UPS, Priority Mail, or another method that pro-
2 vides for tracking of the documents, and ensuring
3 that applicants are informed of the relevant tracking
4 number or numbers; and

5 (2) shall include information on the trav-
6 el.state.gov website describing options that are avail-
7 able to applicants whose documents described in
8 such subsection are lost in the application process.

9 (c) REIMBURSEMENT.—The plan required by sub-
10 section (a) shall provide for reimbursement of the full cost
11 of replacement to the applicant of any of the applicant’s
12 documents described in such subsection that are lost by
13 the Department of State in the application process.

14 **SEC. 6. GAO STUDY.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the
16 United States shall prepare an update to its July 2008
17 study entitled “State Department: Comprehensive Strat-
18 egy Needed to Improve Passport Operations” (GAO-08-
19 891).

20 (b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The study re-
21 quired by subsection (a) shall include a review of the oper-
22 ations of lockbox facilities operated by financial agents of
23 the Department of the Treasury that are responsible for
24 opening and sorting passport application packages,
25 verifying the completeness of the packages, processing

1 payments, and batching the applications, further includ-
2 ing—

3 (1) information on the volume and average
4 times for processing applications for United States
5 passports at the lockbox facilities;

6 (2) an assessment of communication between
7 the Department of State and such facilities;

8 (3) identification of any areas for improvements
9 and increased efficiencies; and

10 (4) a description of how the Department of
11 State and lockbox facilities are planning to shift re-
12 sponsibilities for processing of documents used in
13 the application system for United States passports
14 under an online passport application system.

15 (c) **ADDITIONAL MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.**—The
16 study required by subsection (a) shall also include a review
17 of the Department of State's efforts to estimate and adapt
18 to periods of peak demand for passport services, as well
19 as information on any additional topics that the Comp-
20 troller General determines are relevant to improving pass-
21 port operations.

22 **SEC. 7. PASSPORT OPERATIONS STAFFING AND PASSPORT**
23 **EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

24 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of State should
25 brief Congress on the current staffing levels for employees

1 supporting passport operations and make any rec-
2 ommendations regarding the provision of additional com-
3 pensation to employees that have made outstanding con-
4 tributions to decreasing backlogs in the processing appli-
5 cations for United States passports.

6 (b) CONSULTATION WITH CONGRESS.—The Sec-
7 retary of State should consult with Congress on any addi-
8 tional authorities that may be needed to—

9 (1) provide appropriate incentives and recogni-
10 tion to recruit and retain Department of State em-
11 ployees involved in processing applications for
12 United States passports; and

13 (2) encourage more overtime of such employees
14 until backlogs in processing applications for such
15 passports are reduced.