



BUSINESS FOR DIPLOMATIC ACTION  
A New Brand of American Diplomacy

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As a group of America's senior communications industry experts and officials of multinational corporations dedicated to upgrading the nation's image abroad, we strongly support Act S2324 entitled "Visa Waiver Program Compliance Amendments of 2004." This act would delay the implementation of the biometric passport requirement for visitors to the United States until 2006.

We believe that the present deadline of October 26, 2004, will have far-reaching negative effects on our country's economic, cultural and intellectual development. In addition, it is our firm conviction that the currently planned implementation of this measure represents a looming crisis that could undermine our standing in the world, this at a time when we can ill afford another such setback.

It is important to emphasize that the issue is not the measure itself, but the unintended consequences of its early implementation. There is no doubt the biometric passport program will, with proper and timely implementation, greatly improve our country's ability to secure its borders and will ultimately help foster free movement of visitors to and from the United States.

However, many of the 27 countries that generally fall into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), including some of our most important trading, tourism, business and political allies including the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, Singapore, France, Germany, Japan and Italy, have informed the U.S. State Department that they require another two years to fully develop and deploy their biometric passport programs.

In the interim, according to the proposed legislation, visitors from each of these countries who have previously been able to visit our country freely, will now need to obtain a visa to enter the United States. This measure will result in an additional 5 million visas having to be processed by U.S. embassies and consuls next year alone. Both Secretaries Powell and Ridge have stated that such an additional burden upon our government services would result in "grave consequences."

On a practical and immediate level, the proposed measures will result in the postponement, delay or even cancellation of travel to the United States by businessmen, tourists, scholars, students and family members of US citizens, from every part of the world. This will, in effect, render the United States inaccessible to millions who presently visit our nation every year. In turn, other countries can be expected to enforce reciprocity, which will impede citizens of the United States in their free movements outside our borders.

Beyond the direct impact of this arbitrary deadline on visits to the United States and elsewhere, there will be a number of negative, unintended effects that will paradoxically increase our vulnerability on the economic, political, cultural and human level.

Secretary Powell and the State Department estimate that the economic consequences of imposing the proposed measure on October 26<sup>th</sup> will cost our country billions of dollars. It is clear that, throughout the United States, our economy will suffer gravely if travelers “vote with their feet” and go elsewhere for their business, vacations, studies and conferences.

As significantly, the proposed measure is certain to generate another public image crisis for the United States in the world at large. Even among our long-standing friends and allies – or perhaps *particularly* among this group – the visa requirement has the distinct potential to further fuel the image of an America that does not value its friends, is insensitive to world opinion and seeks refuge in a new “isolationism.”

Given the widely reported difficulties in implementing or deploying our own internal security measures, an inflexible commitment to an unrealistic time frame would reinforce the image of an arrogant nation behaving without regard for the policy and technology challenges that our friends would need to overcome.

Ultimately the most severe consequence will be the effect on our core values. Since the founding of our nation, openness has been fundamental to our success, economically, culturally and politically. At this particular time in our history, whereas it is critical to ensure our country’s security against potential enemies, it is also important that we not be perceived as closing our borders to our friends or to economic growth.

Enacting S2324 and delaying the implementation of the biometric passport requirement will allow a measured, orderly transition to increased security for America. S2324 will prevent potentially disastrous consequences on our economy and show the best face of America to our many visitors and friends around the world.

Sincerely and on behalf of our entire Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KEITH REINHARD". The signature is stylized and cursive, written in all caps.

Keith Reinhard  
President