

Department of State Updates Interview Waiver Policy to Restrict the Categories of Qualifying Non-Immigrant Visa Applicants

February 27, 2025

Effective February 18, 2025, the Department of State has changed the categories of applicants that are eligible to waive the in-person non-immigrant visa interview appointment when applying for a non-immigrant visa stamp for travel to the United States. More applicants must now attend an in-person interview appointment.

Under the prior policy, U.S. Consulates were permitted to waive the in-person visa interview requirement for non-immigrant visa applicants that were previously issued any non-immigrant visa, provided the applicant was applying for a new non-immigrant visa within 48 months of the expiration date of the applicant's previously issued non-immigrant visa. (However, this policy did not apply if the only visa ever issued to the applicant was a B visa).

The new policy gives U.S. Consulates authority to waive in-person non-immigrant visa interviews only for the following categories of visa applicants:

- Applicants who previously held a visa *in the same visa category*, and this visa expired less than 12 months before the date of the new visa application;
- Applicants for 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 visas;
- Applicants for diplomatic- or official-type visas.

Applicants are eligible for an interview waiver only if they also:

- Apply for a non-immigrant visa at a U.S. Consulate in the applicant's country of nationality or residence;
- Have never been refused a visa, unless such refusal was overcome or waived; and
- Have no apparent or potential ineligibility.

As with the prior policy, the authority to waive an in-person non-immigrant visa interview is discretionary, and consular officers may still require in-person non-immigrant visa interviews for applicants who otherwise qualify for such a waiver.

This new policy presents unwelcome news and longer wait times for many visa applicants. The prior policy allowed waivers for applicants who were previously issued any type of visa (unless the previously issued visa was a B visa) and made available interview waivers to applicants whose previously held non-immigrant visa expired within the past 48 months.

Non-immigrant visa applicants should expect longer wait times when applying for non-immigrant visas at U.S. Consulates abroad and may experience a cancellation of an already existing drop-box appointment if the applicant does not meet the new policy's interview waiver criteria. Employers and non-immigrant workers inside the United States should consider this new policy and plan accordingly if non-immigrant visa processing is required following any international travel, especially during the summer travel season.

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For more information on these interview waiver policies, please visit the Department of State's webpage at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/interview-waiver-update-feb-18-2025.html> .

For further questions or assistance, please contact the Miller Canfield Immigration Team.