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News & Types: Immigration Update

Business Immigration Weekly for August 1, 2014

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Practices: Immigration

VISA APPLICANTS SHOULD EXPECT SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTIONS IN VISA ISSUANCE

The Department of State (DOS) has reported that it continues to experience severe and significant disruptions in its ability to issue visas in consular posts abroad, which began on July 20th. The system affected is the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) and the DOS has indicated that it will take several weeks to restore the systems back to their usual functionality. The DOS is currently prioritizing immigrant visas and they have been able to issue these visas without significant delays. As of July 28th, the DOS indicated that it issued 220,000 nonimmigrant visas worldwide, about half of the average normal rate of 425,000. Individuals applying for nonimmigrant visas should expect delays in visa issuance. Many posts are advising applicants that if there is no urgent need to travel that they reschedule their visa appointments. The DOS has indicated that consular posts are able to issue emergency visas, although it is unclear what the requirements are for such issuance. The following is a summary of the information the DOS has released thus far:

1. International Students (F and M visas) should notify their Designated School Official to coordinate a delayed start date for their program, if necessary.
2. Exchange Visitors (J visas) should notify their U.S. sponsor's Responsible Officer to coordinate a delayed start date for their program, if necessary.
3. Diversity Visa Lottery Immigrants, as they are being issued immigrant visas, are a high priority and the DOS expects to allocate all immigrant visas before the program ends for this year on September 30, 2014.
4. The Customs and Border Protection issued a statement indicating that it was accepting referrals from the Department of State for individuals that would be admitted to the United States without a valid visa. These individuals would submit an Application for Waiver of Passport and/or Visa, Form I-193, at the time of admission. We have no further information on whether any referrals have been made already, who is eligible for these referrals, or other details regarding this process.

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