

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 21, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to you to express concern about the ongoing delay in processing passport applications. In Fiscal Year 2020, the Department of State issued 11,711,945 passports which were the fewest since 2005. Today, routine service for most Americans to receive their passport is up to eighteen weeks, with expedited service of twelve weeks. Many expedited requests are not being met, and applicants are waiting for expedited payment refunds. Pre-pandemic, it would have taken roughly two to three weeks for expedited requests and about six to eight weeks for routine services.

Following the success of the COVID-19 vaccine development and distribution, millions of Americans are anxious to begin traveling internationally again, many to visit family who they have not seen in a long time. Whether for family, leisure, or business, this increased demand for international travel will be a boon to our economy, reunite families isolated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and rejuvenate struggling tourist economies.

However, as more and more Americans plan to travel overseas, they are facing unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and a severe backlog in passport application processing. With three passport processing centers in Texas, more than most states, Texas is particularly hard-hit by this backlog. We would like to know what the Bureau of Consular Affairs plans to do to address the passport backlog. While we appreciate the steps that the State Department took to continue remote processing during the COVID-19 lockdown, this effort was not enough. More urgency is needed, and more action is required, such as increasing the availability of the workforce for passport centers and making allowances for these crucial staff to return to work full time.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing what your agency is doing to quickly resume passport processing for all Americans.

Sincerely,

  
JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator

  
TED CRUZ  
United States Senator