

PREFACE

Welcome to the 2008–09 edition of *The Visa Processing Guide and Consular Posts Handbook*. As always, we offer this caveat: Information contained in this book is ever-changing, so always double check the appropriate website or other resource for contact information and names of key consular staff.

Attorneys should use *The Visa Processing Guide* as a research tool, representing a beginning—rather than an end—to find the most up-to-date procedures and policies at U.S. consulates. The various articles will suggest what methods exist to gain information about updated rules. The Consular Affairs Internet website, <http://travel.state.gov>, provides a link to U.S. embassies and consulates online, and lists 150 posts that have websites.

Using the authors' experiences and the assistance of consular officers, the articles contain the policies and procedures that vary from post-to-post around the world. It is clear that there are wide fluctuations in these policies. We have attempted to use a consistent internal structure so that each of the articles highlights the individual post's policies and procedures involving communications; right to counsel; immigrant visa (IV) and nonimmigrant visa (NIV) processes; practice tips and local advice; addresses of local, approved physicians; criteria and availability of discretionary acceptance of out-of-district cases; and in-country conditions, travel tips, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services waiver policies and procedures.

There are several noteworthy regulatory changes consistent throughout all the posts. The Kentucky Consular Center has ceased e-mailing scanned copies of approved NIV petitions to posts. Details of approved NIVs must now be verified via a report called Petition Information Management Service (PIMS) on the Consular Consolidated Database. Also, U.S. Department of State (DOS) recently announced its plan to begin using a new, fully electronic NIV application Form DS-160, Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, which will eventually replace current NIV application forms DS-156, 157, 158, and other related forms. As for IV processing, the posts are now (or in the process of) changing into ALPHA processing ports, in which all processing—including appointment scheduling and document verification—will be done through the National Visa Center. DOS also issued a final rule changing the age for passport issuance to U.S. citizen minors without parental consent from 14 years old to 16. Intending to address the troubling issue of abducted and runaway children, the U.S. passport age requirement is now consistent with that in the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

The editors wish to acknowledge the efforts of the authors of the individual articles that comprise *The Visa Processing Guide*. They represent some of the most knowledgeable and generous of AILA's members. The articles are the result of countless e-mails and late night/early morning phone calls to the consular posts. The authors' general expertise concerning visa processing at these consular posts is readily apparent throughout.

The editors also thank the individual consular officers who cooperated with the authors, providing a unique and candid perspective concerning the policies and procedures at their respective posts. Without their generous spirit and frank comments, *The Visa Processing Guide* would not be possible year after year.

We, of course, could not go without acknowledging our trusted and hardworking associate editors, Michael Davis, Kathy Mautino, and Adan Vega, without whom we would not have been able to accomplish such a task. We also thank AILA Publications Director Tatia L. Gordon-Troy, Managing Editor Kristine L. Tungol, and Assistant Editor Kathy Frazier in the AILA National Office for their hard work and dedication in producing this latest edition. Their premature gray hairs are due, in no small measure, to the global warming effect on editors and authors alike every year.

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