

United States Immigration Newsletter



New York, January 2006

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E-passport test takes flight



WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced Friday that it's launching a second test of its electronic passport initiative next week, as it seeks to curtail the use of bogus passports at international airports. Testing of the e-passports, which carry biometric identification technologies, will be conducted at San Francisco International Airport, as well as Changi Airport in Singapore and Sydney Airport in Australia. The testing will begin Sunday and continue through April 15, with the help of the Australian, New Zealand and Singaporean governments. "This test provides an important opportunity to work with our international partners...to put in place an e-Passport reader solution by the end of fall of this year," Jim Williams, director of US-VISIT, a Homeland Security program, said in a statement. The passports

contain biometric information such as a digital photo, as well as biographic information.

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The technology being tested promises to read and verify the electronic data when those carrying the e-passports attempt entry into the countries via participating airports. U.S. diplomats, Australian and New Zealand citizens and Singapore Airlines officials are among those who have been issued the e-passports. These people will also undergo normal screening procedures at the international airports. The test will be used to gather information to help countries develop their respective electronic passport, the Department of Homeland Security said. The e-passport must comply with the standards issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization. Previously, the Department of Homeland Security conducted testing at the Los Angeles International Airport and the Sydney Airport, after which it determined further testing was needed.

Source: News.com

New program in Texas jails illegal immigrants



EAGLE PASS, TX - A pilot program that jails all illegal immigrants crossing into this Texas border town from Mexico has led to a dramatic fall in numbers attempting the journey, the U.S. Office of Border Patrol said on Friday. A program known as Operation Streamline II, instituted on December 12, is aimed mostly at non-Mexican illegal immigrants who were arrested and released because Border Patrol agents did not have sufficient space to jail them. The blanket crackdown is also being applied to undocumented Mexicans who were previously subject to criminal background checks and released back over the Rio Grande without charges. The U.S. Marshals Service has freed up 1,000 beds in several county jails abutting the

Border Patrol region that includes Eagle Pass, Texas, to accommodate the growing number of immigrants. "The message is one of zero tolerance to all illegal immigrants, whether they are Mexican or (non-Mexican) nationals," said Hilario Leal, the U.S. Border Patrol's spokesman for the sector that includes Eagle Pass. "It appears to be getting out by word-of-mouth and through the media south of the border, as the numbers attempting to cross has fallen dramatically."

Since the pilot program began around Eagle Pass, 140 miles west of San Antonio, the number of undocumented immigrants picked up by Border Patrol agents has dwindled to 10 a day, down from highs of around 150 a day in mid-2005, officials said. The U.S. Office of Border Patrol said 740 illegal immigrants have been arrested and charged with misdemeanor illegal entry under the program. They are tried in federal court and jailed for up to 180 days pending deportation to their country of origin. "We have lots of space, and we can handle all the prisoners the court sends us," Deputy U.S. Marshal Tim Hughes said. "If it grew to an incredible number we could send them out of state." Each year, an unknown number of illegal immigrants, most from Mexico and Latin America, cross the 2,000-mile (3,200-km) border from Mexico, seeking a better life in the United States. Last year, almost 1.2 million were nabbed making the journey. A proposal in the U.S. Congress to build a steel fence equipped with lights and security cameras has angered Mexico."

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- J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa
- H-1B Work Visa
- H-2B Work Visa
- H-3 Trainee Visa
- K-1 Fiance Visa
- L-1 Intracompany Work Visa
- R-1 Religious Worker Visa
- TN Nafta Work Visa

Education:

- High School Diploma
- TOEFL Test

Employment:

Source: Reuters

➔ Backlog in New York city worst across United States



NEW YORK, NY - It might not come as a surprise to tens of thousands of immigrants whose papers are in limbo but New York City has the longest wait for a green card in the country, according to government data. Federal workers are currently processing green card applications that were filed in December 2002. No other district office among 33 across the country lags that far behind. The findings confirm the fears of New Yorkers who have been waiting years for interviews to be scheduled, work authorization cards to be issued, or travel documents to be granted. Counting the old cases and applications filed in the last three years, the backlog could reach 144,000 by next year, said Shawn Saucier, a spokesman for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. One of

the unresolved cases belongs to Wendy Sanchez-Vaynshteyn. She was 9 years old when her mom, Maria Sanchez, applied for permanent residency for herself and her daughter. Her mom was wrongfully denied, took part in a successful class-action lawsuit, and was finally granted amnesty under the 2000 LIFE Act. But under that act, her daughter could not qualify for a green card - just for a work permit. "It really has affected my whole life," said Sanchez-Vaynshteyn, now 24 and married to a U.S. citizen who filed another green card petition for her in 2003. "This is like a dark cloud that is always over you," said the Jackson Heights, Queens, resident. "You can't travel, you can't study to your full capability, you can't focus." For Sanchez-Vaynshteyn, the most heartbreaking effect has been that she can't go visit her family in La Paz, Bolivia. Her grandfather, who raised her until she was 6, has lost all but 30% of his eyesight. "He wants to see me before he goes blind," said the part-time City College student, housekeeper and waitress. "They keep writing me, but they don't understand how difficult it is." Federal officials are aware they need to address the backlog. Last month, immigration managers from the East Coast went on a retreat to figure out how to eliminate New York's monster green card application backlog.

Source: New York Daily News

➔ U.S. faces severe worker shortage in future



WASHINGTON, DC - The United States faces a severe worker shortage in the near future, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said Wednesday in advocating better education for Americans and changes in immigration law to allow in more foreign workers. Chamber President and CEO Thomas Donohue, at a news conference outlining business prospects in 2006, said the country is ill-prepared to deal with the impending retirement of 77 million baby boomers. "We have yet to secure an adequate supply of working taxpayers to run a growing economy and support an explosion of retirees," he said in his organization's report on the state of U.S. business. Donohue said that working to pass new immigration law that includes a guest worker program will be

among the Chamber's top legislative priorities in the new year. He said the Chamber opposed a bill passed by the House in December, which tightens border security and requires employers to verify the legal status of workers but does not address the guest worker issue. He dismissed as a "crummy argument" criticisms that the business community wants a guest worker program to secure access to cheap labor. "What American companies want is labor, and we are going to be significantly without it," Donohue said.

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The Senate is expected to take up the immigration issue next month, and Donohue said his group will be "working to obtain a bill that provides the workers and is in keeping without our legacy as a welcoming nation." Donohue said the Chamber has traditionally stayed out of school reform at the state and local level, but has changed its thinking in a global environment where China graduates eight times, and India five times, as many engineers as the United States. He said the Chamber plans to measure and rank the performance of state school systems, with the aim of helping businesses decide where to locate. The Chamber is also working with other business organizations to double the number of math, science and engineering graduates by 2015. Donohue said that among the business group's other legislative goals this year will be passing legislation to shore up pension plans, finding a solution to the asbestos litigation crisis, promoting health savings accounts and other new approaches to reducing the number of those without health insurance, and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Outer Continental Shelf to environmentally sound oil and gas exploration.

Source: Associated Press and Sacramento Bee

➔ Immigration to the European Union



BRUSSELS, BELGIUM - The European Union (EU) currently consists of 25 countries with 4 applicant countries working towards full EU membership. Citizens of all EU countries have the right to work and live in any member country of their choice. Immigration and visa forms/information is currently available for Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom for instant download. Immigration and visa forms for Norway, a non EU country, which has the highest standard of living in the world is also available. For more information visit www.euimmigration.org

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