

Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel Act (JOLT Act) Summary

The JOLT Act would improve visa processing and expand international travel by:

- Modifying agreements with certain countries on a nonreciprocal basis to allow for extended visa validity periods which would reduce the number of times those visitors must renew their visas. Specifically focusing on China.
- Providing an option to expedite the processing of B-1 and B-2 business and visitor visas at premium cost. Just as the State Department charges an extra fee to expedite the processing of a U.S. passport, this bill would encourage the State Department to create a pilot program that charges an extra fee to expedite the processing of B-1/B-2 visas. This provision would ensure that applicants requesting premium processing for such visas are interviewed and their visa applications are adjudicated not later than 3 business days after the date of the applicant's request for a visa appointment, absent compelling security concerns. Expedited processing would enable companies to more efficiently move their personnel and clients into the United States to meet business demands.
- Allowing Canadian retirees to visit the U.S. for up to 240 days, if the alien demonstrates that they are (1) a citizen of Canada; (2) older than 50; (3) owns a residence in the U.S. or has signed a rental agreement for accommodations in the U.S. for the duration of their stay; (4) is not inadmissible; (5) is not deportable; (6) will not work while in the U.S.; and (7) will not seek any form of assistance or benefit under section 403(a) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.
- Enabling the State Department to create a pilot program to incentivize visitors to submit applications during low-peak seasons. Visa interview wait times typically lengthen during the summer months and around holidays so this bill gives the State Department the flexibility to lower visa application fees for B-1 and B-2 visas during off-peak seasons which will encourage travelers with greater flexibility to apply for visas when demand is lower.
- Allows DHS to expand enrollment in Global Entry to include individuals employed by international organizations, selected by the Secretary of DHS, which maintain strong working relationships with the U.S. To enroll in Global Entry these individuals must be sponsored by (1) an international organization selected by the Secretary; and (2) the government that issued the passport that the individual is using to participate in the program. Additionally an individual has to successfully complete all applicable security requirements established by

the Secretary, including cooperation from the applicable foreign government to ensure that they don't pose a risk to U.S. DHS has unreviewable discretion to revoke or offer this.

- Establishing a visa processing standard. This bill would mandate the State Department to conduct visa interviews and review applications not later than 15 days after the date on which an applicant requests an appointment. Beginning one year after its enactment, this legislation would require the State Department to move to a 10 day processing standard for all nonimmigrant visas. However, this bill would allow additional processing time for applications subject to security-related checks and clearance. A visa processing standard would provide international travelers more predictability regarding the U.S. visa application process. Additionally, we believe that this enhanced processing standard would provide the State Department sufficient time to adequately interview and review a routine nonimmigrant visa application.
- Encouraging the State Department to use nonimmigrant visa application fees to hire a sufficient number of foreign service officers and limited non-career appointment consular officers to continuously meet and maintain the processing standard. The State Department has already added limited non-career appointment consular officers to countries with long visa wait times such as Brazil and China; however, travelers to the U.S. from these countries are primed to grow exponentially in the next few years and this legislation would ensure that the State Department plans accordingly so that it can continue to meet the growing demand.
- Expanding the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). DHS may admit countries with an overstay rate and visa refusal rate of not more than 3 percent if country meets other law enforcement criteria. The visa refusal rate requirement may be waived by the DHS Secretary if it does not exceed 10 percent and the country meets all other requirements. The bill also establishes a probationary period for non-compliant countries and requires a Comptroller review of the overstay tracking methodology used by DHS. The bill also changes the current methodology for calculating visa refusal rates from number of applications to number of actual applicants. This is important because under the current calculations a bad actor could apply for a visa multiple times and get denied – this in turn makes the visa refusal rate higher for a particular country. The bill also calls for an evaluation of ESTA including an evaluation of the security risks of aliens who enter the United States without an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization verification.