



THE TEXAS STATE CHAMBER

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November 29, 2022

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

Re: Tourist, student, and work visa delays

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Since the onset of the global pandemic, communities and businesses have suffered greatly from an economic standpoint. In 2020, visa issuance was halted due to the ongoing pandemic. Since then, Consulates around the world struggle to catch up with the extensive demand for entry into the United States. In many countries, booking an appointment to request or renew a visa takes months, and in some particular cases, years. This situation continues to negatively impact communities and businesses by being a contributing factor in our country's labor shortage.

The United States is experiencing a tight labor market and the last thing our businesses need is another barrier to entry for qualified, skilled, foreign workers who want to contribute to the economy. Texas is doubly affected by these visa related challenges. Given the extensiveness of our shared border with Mexico, a large part of our economy depends on foreign visitors that use their tourist visas for shopping and vacations - all activities that boost the economy of Texas and local communities. These visa holders are often substantial contributors to our economy, working in high-level positions for major global corporations, attending universities, and spending their hard-earned dollars in our hotels, shops, and restaurants.

The current months or even years of potential backlog needs to be resolved immediately. Issues like these are prime examples of the unreliability of existing visa programs. On behalf of our members and the business community, the Texas Association of Business urges the U.S. Department of State to take the necessary steps and implement the necessary strategies to immediately shorten wait times for student, work, and tourist visas so the economy can benefit from these contributing members of society.

The Texas Association of Business is the largest general business association in the state, the Texas State Chamber of Commerce, and the official state-level affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers. Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

Glenn Hamer
President and CEO
Texas Association of Business

cc: The Honorable Julie Stuftt, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services