



January 31, 2003

The Honorable Colin Powell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
Harry S. Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

We are writing to express the concern of many different organizations that delays and uncertainty in visa processing are negatively impacting our activities and the U.S. economy. We urge you, as you proceed in making necessary changes to enhance the security of our visa system, to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to minimizing delays and other impacts to business, higher education, the arts, medical facilities and other interests.

Since the attacks of September 11, we are aware of the critical importance of our system of screening foreign nationals for visas to visit, conduct business, or work in the United States. We fully support measures that will better screen out those who may wish to do us harm. However, we also understand the importance of our visa issuance process to the well being of many segments of our economy.

International visitors not only support one million jobs in the U.S. travel and tourism industries, they also provide needed workforce when U.S. workers are unavailable, support vital educational and cultural efforts, promote international trade, and seek the assistance of our world-renowned health care providers. Each of these purposes also serves our national interests.

The new screening procedures put into place in the last year have severely strained the capacity of the visa-issuing posts abroad, the visa office of the State Department in Washington, and the various other government entities involved in obtaining necessary clearances. The severe delays and uncertainty surrounding visa issuance for legitimate applicants has resulted in lost business opportunities for U.S. companies, delayed projects or movement of projects abroad, loss of jobs in some industries, workforce shortages, and other economic stresses.

The new Department of Homeland Security is charged with ensuring that "the overall economic security of the United States is not diminished by efforts, activities, and programs aimed at securing the homeland." Because of the negative impacts to the economy and other national interests, we strongly urge you to devote all necessary resources to the streamlining of these new security procedures, and frankly evaluate the resource needs of any future planned changes (such as increasing visa interviews).



These resource needs must be conveyed to Congress, to ensure that adequate funding is provided through annual appropriations. We will strongly support the effort to secure funding for these initiatives in Congress.

We greatly appreciate the difficult jobs you have in protecting our homeland and ensuring the continued ability of legitimate travelers to come to our shores. We urge you to devote the resources necessary to ensure that these dual missions are effectively carried out.

Sincerely,

Academy for Educational Development  
AFS Intercultural Programs  
Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange  
Alliances Abroad  
American Arts Alliance  
American Association of Intensive English Programs  
American Chamber of Commerce in China  
American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi  
American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong  
American Chamber of Commerce in India  
American Chamber of Commerce in Japan  
American Chamber of Commerce of Shanghai  
American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore  
American Council of Young Political Leaders  
American Councils for International Exchange: ACTR/ACCELS  
American Council on International Personnel  
American Electronics Association  
American Health Care Association  
American Hotel and Lodging Association  
American Immigration Lawyers Association  
American Institute for Foreign Study  
American Institute for Foreign Study Foundation  
American Nursery and Landscape Association  
American Symphony Orchestra League  
Associated Builders and Contractors  
Association of International Education Administrators  
American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce  
America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST)  
American-Scandinavian Foundation  
Amity Institute



Asia-Pacific Council of American Chambers of Commerce  
Aspire Worldwide  
Association for International Practical Training  
Association of Performing Arts Presenters  
AuPairCare  
AYUSA Global Youth Exchange  
Border Trade Alliance  
British Universities North America Club: BUNAC  
CDS International  
CEC International Partners  
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council on International Educational Exchange  
Dance/USA  
EF Foundation for Foreign Study  
French-American Chamber of Commerce  
Hong Kong-U.S. Business Council  
Institute of International Education  
InterExchange  
International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions  
International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus  
International Association for Exhibition Management  
International Diplomacy Council  
International Internship Programs  
International Trade Alliance  
Intrax WorkTravel  
IREX: International Research & Exchanges Board  
J.L. Deupree & Associates  
LASPAU: Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas  
Laurasian Institution  
Minnesota Agricultural Student Trainee Program  
NAFSA: Association of International Educators  
National Club Association  
National Council for Eurasian and East European Research  
National Council for International Visitors  
National Restaurant Association  
North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance  
The Ohio International Agricultural and Horticulture Internship Program of  
The Ohio State University  
Sister Cities International  
Society for Human Resource Management



Travel Business Roundtable  
Travel Industry Association of America  
Theatre Communications Group  
University and College Intensive English Programs  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
U.S.-India Business Council  
U.S.-Korea Business Council  
US-UK Fulbright Commission  
World Education Services  
World Heritage  
World Learning  
YMCA International Program Services

cc: Secretary Ridge (by separately addressed letter)