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# State Department to Launch Visa Bond Pilot Program Targeting Overstay Risks

*August 5, 2025*
*— Categories: Breaking News*


The U.S. State Department has announced a proposed pilot program that would require certain business and tourist visa applicants to post bonds of up to $15,000. This initiative aims to reduce the rate of visa overstays and limit the financial liability of the federal government when visitors fail to depart the country as required.

According to a notice set for publication in the *Federal Register*, the 12-month pilot program would apply to foreign nationals from countries identified as having high overstay rates or inadequate internal documentation and vetting procedures. Bond amounts will be determined based on the applicant's risk category, with levels set at $5,000, $10,000, or $15,000. The program is expected to take effect 15 days after official publication.

The notice clarifies that this bond requirement would not impact travelers from countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows short-term visits to the United States for tourism or business without a visa for up to 90 days. The VWP currently includes 42 nations, mainly in Europe, as well as select countries in Asia and the Middle East.

Individuals subject to the bond program would be applying for temporary non-immigrant visas under categories such as B-1 (business visitors) and B-2 (tourists). Affected applicants would be required to pay the bond as a condition of receiving their visa. However, the bond may be waived depending on an individual's specific circumstances, subject to the discretion of the consular officer.

The move is part of a broader effort to strengthen immigration control and reduce abuse of visa privileges. The policy also complements recent changes to visa renewal procedures, which now include expanded requirements for in-person interviews, and proposals requiring Diversity Visa Lottery applicants to possess a valid passport from their country of citizenship.

The department's notice explains that this program is intended to hold visa holders accountable for adhering to their approved stay duration, and it points out that "recent evidence does not support concerns over administrative burdens or public misperception," which had been cited as reasons to avoid bond requirements in the past.

Although visa bonds have been discussed in prior administrations, they were never fully implemented. The State Department now argues that the current risks of overstays and inadequate vetting warrant a practical trial of the policy. The list of countries whose nationals will be affected is expected to be published upon the program's activation.

As the federal government continues to seek ways to improve compliance with immigration laws, this bond system could signal a more rigorous approach to visitor accountability, especially from regions with elevated overstay rates and lax documentation practices.