

Washington Targets Visa Overstays with \$15,000 Bond Program

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. government is set to introduce a visa bond pilot program that could require some visitors to pay up to \$15,000 as a condition of entry. The move, scheduled to begin August 20, aims to deter foreign nationals from overstaying their visas, particularly from countries with historically high overstay rates.

According to a notice in the Federal Register, U.S. consular officers will be granted discretion to impose bond requirements on individuals applying for business (B-1) or tourism (B-2) visas. The decision will primarily apply to applicants from nations with high rates of noncompliance, or where security screening and vetting procedures are considered insufficient.

The bond amounts will be set at \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000, with officers generally encouraged to require at least \$10,000. These funds will be refunded if the visitor complies with the terms of their visa and departs the U.S. within the allowed timeframe.

This initiative marks a revival of a similar policy introduced during President Donald Trump's administration in November 2020, which was not fully implemented due to a sharp decline in global travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. The newly restructured pilot program is expected to last for roughly one year.

A spokesperson for the State Department outlined the determining factors for countries subject to the bond, including high visa overstay rates, weak screening infrastructure, misuse of citizenship-by-investment schemes, and broader foreign policy considerations. The specific countries affected have not yet been confirmed and may change throughout the year.

Some of the nations previously identified under Trump's travel restrictions, such as Haiti, Chad, Eritrea, Myanmar, and Yemen, also have elevated overstay statistics. Several African countries, including Burundi, Djibouti, and Togo, were also cited in recent U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reports for high overstay levels in fiscal year 2023.

The policy reflects a broader trend of tightening visa regulations, part of the U.S. government's continuing focus on national security and immigration control. In June, a travel ban affecting 19 countries was upheld, citing national security risks.

Additionally, a new provision passed by Congress as part of a larger spending package in July 2025 will implement a \$250 "visa integrity fee", effective October 1. The fee will apply to all non-immigrant visa applicants and may be refunded to individuals who abide by visa conditions. The U.S. Travel Association has expressed concern that this additional cost may discourage legitimate travel, potentially making the U.S. one of the most expensive countries for visitor visa applicants.

The association also estimated that only about 2,000 individuals may be directly impacted by the pilot bond program, likely from countries with low volumes of U.S.-bound travel.

Critics of the plan say it could reduce tourism and international business travel, while proponents argue it reinforces accountability and supports lawful immigration practices.