

# National Visa Center Update for Congressional Offices



*U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs*

## Announcing NVC's I-526 Investor Assistance Desk

February 2016

Customers with questions related to an approved I-526 petition can now correspond with the National Visa Center (NVC) using a dedicated e-mail address: [NVCeb5@state.gov](mailto:NVCeb5@state.gov). The newly created I-526 Investor Assistance Desk, being launched on February 22, is part of NVC's continuing efforts to improve customer service.

Upon receipt of an approved petition from USCIS, our Investor Assistance Desk will oversee the addition of potential derivative applicants and creation of fee bills. Customers will e-mail their derivative's relationship documents to [NVCeb5@state.gov](mailto:NVCeb5@state.gov), which can also be used for inquiries on derivatives, the Child Status Protection Act, and general case status.

The Investor Assistance Desk does not change NVC's process for documentarily qualifying an immigrant visa case and scheduling an interview overseas. All visa applicants, including those in the EB-5 category, should submit their financial, civil, and supporting documents to NVC in one package following the [instructions online](#). The goal of NVC's Investor Assistance Desk is to provide more transparent and effective customer service through a team specially trained in the I-526 petition.

## Payment of IV Fees

Approximately 90% of immigrant visa applicants pay their fees online through the State Department's convenient Consular Electronic Application Center ([CEAC](#)). For this reason, NVC will begin to phase out use of the lockbox money order program over the next 12 to 18 months. While NVC will still accept money orders sent to the lockbox until further notice, you may notice that NVC is no longer promoting the lockbox as an option.

Remember that an applicant will not be able to access the Form DS-260 Application for an Immigrant Visa until he or she has paid these fees. When paying online, applicants should allow up to five days for NVC to process fee payments before continuing to the DS-260.

In contrast, when fee payments are sent to the lockbox, it can take up to five days for NVC to receive payment notification from the bank and an additional five days for NVC to process these fees. Only then will the payment status be reflected as "paid" in CEAC.



## Current Processing Times (2/17)

- 12 days to process incoming petitions upon receipt of files from USCIS
- 33 days to review civil and financial documents mailed by applicants
- NVC receives 14,000 to 16,000 petitions weekly from USCIS

## Record Year for Immigrant Visas

The Bureau of Consular Affairs recently published worldwide visa [statistics](#) for 2015, which proved to be a record year for NVC. As you can see from the chart below, NVC facilitated more immigrant visa interviews than ever before in nearly every category.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Immigrant Categories</b>					
Immediate Relatives	216,856	235,616	205,435	185,130	243,432
Special Immigrants <sup>1</sup>	1,861	5,219	6,424	12,084	9,468
Vietnam Amerasian Immigrants	35	75	12	13	13
Family Sponsored Preference	192,891	189,128	189,020	197,760	208,840
Employment-Based Preference	15,099	19,137	21,144	21,365	21,613
Armed Forces Special Immigrants	0	0	0	0	0
Diversity Immigrants	49,507	33,125	51,080	51,018	48,097
<b>Total</b>	<b>476,249</b>	<b>482,300</b>	<b>473,115</b>	<b>467,370</b>	<b>531,463</b>

NVC is proud of its role helping families reunite and facilitating business investment in the U.S., all while providing a crucial role in defending our borders. Here are NVC's unique workload statistics from FY2015:

- Received 648,000+ petitions from USCIS
- Updated 269,000+ newly current Family-Based petitions
- 456,000+ cases processed and sent to embassies/consulates overseas
- 2.7 million cases at NVC, including cases NVC is actively working on (immediate relative cases and current cases in numerically limited categories) and non-current cases in preference categories
- Received 1.4 million pieces of incoming mail
- Sent 3.3 million pieces of outgoing mail
- Responded to 1,683,000+ written inquiries
- Responded to 1,471,000+ public calls
- Responded to 92,000+ Congressional inquiries

## Change to Dominican Document Requirements

Civil documents from the Dominican Republic no longer need to be legalized by the mail civil registry office in Santo Domingo. This change is effective immediately and was made in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo based on changes in Dominican federal procedures. Civil documents include such government-issued items as birth, marriage, death, and divorce certificates. We hope this change will help immigrant visa applicants in the Dominican Republic more quickly and easily compile their required documents.

### TIPS FOR FASTER SERVICE

- E-mail us at [NVCCongressional@state.gov](mailto:NVCCongressional@state.gov)
- Use the NVC case number or USCIS receipt number as the subject line
- Please refer to one case per e-mail
- Include in the body of the e-mail the name and date of birth of the beneficiary (visa applicant)
- Include a privacy waiver that either specifically refers to DOS or NVC, or gives broad permission to "any federal agency" to share information

## Improvements to Review of Form I-864W

NVC recently improved its process for reviewing cases where a Form I-864W, Intending Immigrant's Affidavit of Support Exemption, is likely required. We believe these changes will help applicants eligible for an exemption of the Affidavit of Support requirements move more quickly to the visa interview stage.

[Form I-864W](#) is used only in specific circumstances:

- When an applicant has earned or can be credited with at least 40 eligible quarters under the Social Security Act.
- When a petitioner is a U.S. citizen who is sponsoring a natural or adopted child, other than a stepchild, who is under 18 years old.
- If the applicant is a self-petitioning widow(er).
- If the applicant is a self-petitioning battered spouse or child.
- If the petitioner is sponsoring a child who will become a U.S. citizen immediately upon entry under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 (CCA).

Moving forward, NVC will now send an assessment letter – rather than a checklist letter – if the signature was left blank. This is because the majority of Forms I-864W must be signed by the overseas applicant, who is most often an underage child, rather than the petitioner in the United States. Therefore, these forms can usually be signed during the visa interview in the presence of a consular officer or the applicant can bring an original, signed form to the interview. All other types of Affidavit of Support forms still require an original signature when submitted to NVC.

Additionally, sometimes petitioners (or applicants) who are eligible for an exemption from the Affidavit of Support requirement aren't aware of the exemption and unnecessarily submit a fully completed Form I-864. If NVC receives a Form I-864 for a case that we believe to be eligible for an I-864W, we will review the submitted Form I-864. If that form has been completed appropriately, NVC will accept it without asking for a Form I-864W. However, if the form does not contain the minimum information required for a consular officer to accept and adjudicate the form, NVC will request a Form I-864W in its place.

## REMOVABLE MEDIA

Please remind constituents that NVC cannot accept documents saved on any form of electronic media, such as CDs and memory cards.

If a constituent sends electronic media to NVC, we will return it to the customer **unopened**.

## Improving Our File Storage Capacity



*The National Visa Center is in the midst of moving all of our physical case files currently stored on static shelves to high-density compressed shelving units, which are more stable and save a tremendous amount of space. This change not only helps us better secure and access our case files but also makes room for future growth at NVC.*

## National Visa Center Customer Service Pledge

The U.S. Department of State manages the visa process strictly but fairly in order to best protect the United States. We are committed to the essential openness for which the United States has always been known. The National Visa Center [promises](#) to you, the visa applicant, that:

- We will treat you with dignity and respect.
- We will treat you as an individual and your case as unique.
- We will provide detailed and accurate information on the application process in our communications with you and on our website.

At the same time, we expect you, the visa applicant, to:

- Complete your application fully and accurately, and submit your supporting documents in a timely manner.
- Prepare for your interview by reviewing the instructions provided by NVC and the embassy or consulate where you will attend an interview.
- Please note, U.S. visa application fees are non-refundable.

## Important Online Resources for Constituents

Here are some of the most useful website resources for information on immigrant visas:

<a href="#">General U.S. visa information</a>	<a href="http://usvisas.state.gov">usvisas.state.gov</a>
<a href="#">NVC information and instructions</a>	<a href="http://nvc.state.gov">nvc.state.gov</a>
<a href="#">Consular Electronic Application Center</a>	<a href="http://ceac.state.gov">ceac.state.gov</a>
Department of State's <a href="#">Visa Bulletin</a>	<a href="http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/law-and-policy/bulletin.html">travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/law-and-policy/bulletin.html</a>
<a href="#">Check Your Priority Date Online</a>	<a href="http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/immigrate/immigrant-process/approved/checkdate.html">travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/immigrate/immigrant-process/approved/checkdate.html</a>
<a href="#">How to submit documents to NVC</a>	<a href="http://nvc.state.gov/submit">nvc.state.gov/submit</a>
<a href="#">Contact information for NVC</a>	<a href="http://nvc.state.gov/ask">nvc.state.gov/ask</a>
<a href="#">U.S. Embassy &amp; Consulate Websites</a>	<a href="http://usembassy.gov">usembassy.gov</a>
<a href="#">USCIS</a>	<a href="http://uscis.gov">uscis.gov</a>
<a href="#">Tips for Filing the I-864</a>	<a href="http://uscis.gov/forms/tips-filing-form-i-864-affidavit-support-under-section-213a-ina">uscis.gov/forms/tips-filing-form-i-864-affidavit-support-under-section-213a-ina</a>

## CONTACT US

### Congressional Inquiries Team

 603-334-0828

 [NVCCongressional@state.gov](mailto:NVCCongressional@state.gov)

*The above contact information is for Congressional use only. Please do not share this information with the public.*

### Website

<http://nvc.state.gov>

## GENERAL PUBLIC INQUIRIES

 603-334-0700

Monday through Friday  
7:00 am – midnight EDT

 E-mail via the public inquiry form on <http://nvc.state.gov/ask>

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