

# U.S. EASES BURDEN ON BUSINESSES BY LIFTING COVID-19 VACCINE REQUIREMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

Insights  
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The COVID-19 vaccination requirement for international travelers will end on May 11, along with the end of the related public health emergency, according to a recent announcement from the Biden administration. The removal of the vaccine requirement – which has been in place since November 8, 2021 – aligns U.S. policy with other countries, including Canada, which eliminated similar restrictions for international travelers in October 2022. The policy change is expected to not only ease international travel but relieve the burden on businesses wishing to bring over foreign workers and business visitors. Here’s a brief background on the requirement, as well as the upcoming changes.

## Background on U.S. Entry Requirements

Starting in early 2020, noncitizen travelers who were otherwise eligible to come to the United States may have found themselves blocked from traveling unless they could obtain a “National Interest Exemption” (NIE) from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Obtaining an NIE was a hit-or-miss process, with some consulates and embassies operating with significant delays and others being sparing with NIE approvals.

Unlike U.S. citizens and permanent residents, foreign travelers seeking to enter the country were still required to show proof that vaccination was completed at least 14 days prior to travel and to present a negative COVID-19 test within three days of attempting to enter the U.S. (along with all other required entry documents). Unvaccinated nonimmigrant employees and their families were unable to

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enter the U.S. unless they qualified for one of the limited exceptions.

## Service Focus

### Immigration

#### **Improving Conditions Lead to Changes**

As of November 8, 2021, businesses were able to bring in vaccinated foreign workers and visitors, but still faced roadblocks – including extensive backlogs and wait times – for unvaccinated candidates and visitors.

Given the improving conditions related to the pandemic, the Biden administration [said on May 1](#) that “we are now in a different phase of our response when these measures are no longer necessary.”

#### **No Changes to Green Card Vaccine Requirements**

While the new policy shift will make international travel easier for foreign workers, it’s important to note that COVID-19 vaccination is still required for foreign workers applying for green cards (permanent residency) in the U.S. absent a separate announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – or unless they are eligible for an exception. Notably, many of the vaccinations required for permanent residence are not required for international travel.

#### **Conclusion**

Although the vaccine requirement for international travel has ended, it still applies to certain individuals pursuing green cards. Nevertheless, this change represents progress towards reopening borders and facilitating international mobility.

We will continue to monitor further developments and provide updates as they arise, so be sure to subscribe to [Fisher Phillips’ Insight System](#) to gather the most up-to-date information. If you have questions, please contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney in our [Immigration Practice Group](#).