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STATE DEPARTMENT PAUSES IMMIGRANT VISA APPOINTMENTS WORLDWIDE: 4 STEPS FOR EMPLOYERS

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State Department Pauses Immigrant Visa Appointments Worldwide: 4 Steps for Employers

The State Department just paused all immigrant visa appointments at US embassies and consulates worldwide, citing the need to train consular officers on new “public charge” screening standards. The pause began on Monday of this week and applies globally, with no announced date for when normal scheduling will resume. It comes just days after a federal judge struck down the administration’s earlier 75-country immigrant visa freeze as unlawful, and it affects many family- and employment-based green card applicants who are going through consular processing abroad. What does this mean for your workforce planning, and what four steps should you consider?

What is Being Paused?

The State Department says it launched a “global training initiative” this month to ensure consular officers evaluate visa applicants “comprehensively and consistently.” Officials announced they would pay particular attention to whether an applicant is likely to become a public charge, meaning primarily dependent on certain government assistance.

To carry out the training, the department is adjusting immigrant visa appointments at posts around the world. Applicants with interviews already scheduled are reportedly receiving cancellation notices without a new date attached.

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The department has not said how long the training will take or when appointments will resume.

Who is Affected?

This pause applies to immigrant visas, meaning cases for individuals seeking to live and work permanently in the United States through consular processing abroad. That includes many employment-based green card applicants who must complete their final visa interview at a US embassy or consulate rather than through adjustment of status inside the United States.

It does not appear to affect nonimmigrant work visas like H-1B, L-1, O-1, or E visas, or the ability of employees already in the US to pursue adjustment of status through USCIS. Given the confusion this kind of announcement tends to generate among employees, it's worth communicating that distinction to your workforce clearly and early.

WHICH VISA CASES ARE AFFECTED?			
PAUSED	NOT CURRENTLY PAUSED		
Family-based green card interviews	H-1B, L-1, O-1, E nonimmigrant work visas		
Employment-based green card interviews (EB categories)	Tourist/business visitor visas (B1/B2)		
Final visa issuance, even for already-approved cases	Adjustment of status filed inside the US through USCIS		

What is the Bigger Picture?

This is not the administration's first attempt at this kind of pause. A federal judge in the Southern District of New York recently ruled that the [prior 75-country immigrant visa freeze](#) exceeded the Secretary of State's authority. Plaintiffs in that litigation have already filed an emergency motion arguing that this new training pause is simply a way of keeping the enjoined policy in effect without complying with the court's order.

That means this pause could be impacted by court order at any time. It could be modified or struck down by a court on a timeline outside anyone's control.

What Should Employers Do Now?

1. Identify affected cases. Determine whether any of your employees or candidates are awaiting immigrant visa interviews or issuance at a consulate abroad, particularly those nearing the final stages of employment-based green card sponsorship.

2. Review options with counsel. For cases caught in the pause, work with your FP immigration attorney to assess whether alternative pathways exist, such as shifting timelines, exploring bridge options, or adjusting start dates.

3. Communicate proactively. Your foreign workforce employees are likely to be anxious and uncertain. Clear, factual updates about what is and isn't affected, paired with realistic expectations about timing, can help you preserve trust with them while the situation develops.

4. Build in flexibility. Given the legal uncertainty around this pause, avoid locking in hard deadlines tied to an assumed resumption date. Monitor for updates and be prepared to adjust again if the pause is challenged or changes in scope.

Conclusion

Fisher Phillips will continue to monitor this situation and will provide updates as new information becomes available. In the meantime, we encourage you to subscribe to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get 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](#).