

AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 118-

36

OFFERED BY MR. ISSA OF CALIFORNIA

Add at the end of title XVII the following:

1 **Subtitle D—Passport System**
2 **Reform and Backlog Prevention**

3 **SEC. 17___ . PASSPORT REFORM AND BACKLOG FINDINGS**
4 **AND SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the
7 United States experienced a major backlog of pass-
8 port applications and passport processing wait times
9 of up to 13 weeks, exclusive of shipping times.

10 (2) Over the past several years, the Department
11 has experienced repeated delays in its attempts to
12 modernize the passport issuance process.

13 (3) The adoption of additional commercially
14 available information technology solutions at several
15 stages of the passport issuance process could greatly
16 enhance and accelerate such process.

17 (4) The United States passport is a widely rec-
18 ognized and trusted identity and travel document

1 that is of tremendous importance to its bearer
2 around the globe.

3 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON PASSPORT REFORM
4 AND BACKLOG.—It is the sense of Congress that—

5 (1) as a routine matter, an adult who has sub-
6 mitted a routine new or renewal passport application
7 should be reliably able to expect that such applica-
8 tion will be adjudicated by the Department, at a rea-
9 sonable cost, in a time frame which is conducive to
10 international travel;

11 (2) the Department should seek to further mod-
12 ernize and streamline the passport issuance process
13 to enable a decrease in processing times below pre-
14 pandemic levels of six-to-eight weeks, specifically for
15 routine adult passport renewals with respect to
16 which the Department should seek to decrease aver-
17 age processing times to less than 30 days; and

18 (3) the Department should take all reasonable
19 steps, including the use of available technology and
20 best practices, to protect the integrity of the pass-
21 port issuance process, the privacy of passport hold-
22 ers, and the efficiency of processing passport
23 issuance requests.

1 **SEC. 17____. STANDARDS FOR PASSPORT ISSUANCE PROC-**
2 **ESS.**

3 In administering and modernizing the passport
4 issuance process, the Assistant Secretary shall evaluate
5 the performance of such process against the following cri-
6 teria:

7 (1) To maintain a service standard of proc-
8 essing a routine new or renewal adult passport appli-
9 cation from document submission until mailing of
10 final documents in an expeditious and reliable time-
11 frame.

12 (2) To maintain affordable passport fees and
13 surcharges.

14 (3) To ensure world-class technical, security,
15 and cybersecurity standards for United States pass-
16 ports and the passport issuance process.

17 (4) To minimize downtime for the Travel Docu-
18 ment Issuance System.

19 (5) To minimize the suspense rate resulting
20 from typographical, clerical, or picture-based errors,
21 including by enabling such suspensions to be re-
22 solved electronically.

23 (6) To provide a streamlined customer experi-
24 ence for passport applicants.

25 (7) To provide reasonably convenient passport
26 services to United States citizens and nationals liv-

1 ing a significant distance from a passport agency,
2 particularly residents in a significant population cen-
3 ter more than a 5-hour drive from a passport agen-
4 cy.

5 **SEC. 17____. ENHANCED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLU-**
6 **TIONS TO IMPROVE THE PASSPORT**
7 **ISSUANCE PROCESS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary, in con-
9 sultation with the Chief Information Officer, shall imple-
10 ment the information technology solutions described in
11 subsection (b) in accordance with the timelines described
12 in such subsection.

13 (b) ENHANCED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLU-
14 TIONS AND TIMELINES DESCRIBED.—The enhanced infor-
15 mation technology solutions and timelines described in this
16 subsection are the following:

17 (1) Not later than 2 years after the date of the
18 enactment of this subtitle, the Assistant Secretary,
19 in consultation with the Chief Information Officer,
20 shall, including if necessary through the awarding of
21 a contract or expanding an existing, establish a tool
22 to enable congressional offices to monitor the status
23 of individual passport applications being handled as
24 casework by such offices.

1 (2)(A) Not later than 2 years after the date of
2 the enactment of this subtitle, the Assistant Sec-
3 retary, in consultation with the Chief Information
4 Officer, shall take all reasonable steps, including if
5 necessary the awarding of a contract for the estab-
6 lishment and ongoing maintenance of a service to
7 provide to passport applicants automated, voluntary
8 proactive communications, by email or text message,
9 for each progress point in the passport issuance
10 process, and for the notification of application er-
11 rors, delivery of mail tracking numbers, and remind-
12 ers of renewal eligibility.

13 (B) Applicants shall be provided the choice
14 of whether to use the services described in sub-
15 paragraph (A) and data gained as a result of
16 participation in such services shall not be trans-
17 ferred to any third party outside the Depart-
18 ment or its contract awardees.

19 (C) The services described in subparagraph
20 (A) shall provide separate options for email and
21 text message notification, as well as separate
22 options for processing-related notifications and
23 renewal eligibility notifications.

24 (3)(A) Consistent with the Bureau's moderniza-
25 tion plans and timelines, and subject to the avail-

1 ability of funds, the Assistant Secretary, in consulta-
2 tion with the Chief Information Officer, shall seek to
3 enter into a contract or contracts as appropriate, for
4 the establishment and maintenance of a mobile ap-
5 plication to allow for the centralization of applicant
6 communication with the Department, including doc-
7 ument submission, application status tracking, vir-
8 tual appointments, access to the notification of ap-
9 plication errors, and allowing for passport holders to
10 receive messages from the Department and commu-
11 nicate emergencies to the Department.

12 (B) The Assistant Secretary shall provide
13 each passport applicant with the option of
14 whether to use the mobile application described
15 in subparagraph (A) or another service of the
16 Department.

17 (C) As a condition for awarding any con-
18 tracts described in subparagraph (A), the
19 awardee shall demonstrate that it can begin
20 tests on the solution within one year of the
21 award of the contract and complete implemen-
22 tation, including bug fixes, cybersecurity audits,
23 and customer service testing, not later than two
24 years from the award of the contract.

1 (4)(A) Consistent with existing law, the Assist-
2 ant Secretary, in consultation with the Chief Infor-
3 mation Officer, shall expand the online passport re-
4 newal system, including to accommodate electronic
5 acceptance of routine first-time adult applications as
6 applicable, in addition to adult renewal applications
7 in sufficient volume to be able to accommodate most
8 applications by the date that is four years from the
9 date of enactment of this subtitle.

10 (B) Planning carried out to implement
11 subparagraph (A) shall prepare the Bureau to
12 verify applications without recourse to the in-
13 formation gained through appearance in person
14 described in section 1 of the Act of June 15,
15 1917 (22 U.S.C. 213), subject to any additional
16 authorities required.

17 (C) To meet the objectives described in
18 subparagraphs (A) and (B), the Assistant Sec-
19 retary, in consultation with the Chief Informa-
20 tion Officer, shall, to the maximum extent prac-
21 ticable, make use of commercially-available
22 technology solutions, including by seeking to
23 enter into a contract or contracts for the expan-
24 sion and maintenance of the online passport re-

1 newal system to accommodate the functionality
2 described in such subparagraphs.

3 (D) In expanding the online passport re-
4 newal system pursuant to subparagraph (C),
5 the following services should be included or oth-
6 erwise accounted for:

7 (i) A user-friendly internet website or
8 portal to facilitate internet-based submis-
9 sion of passport applications by adults.

10 (ii) To the extent possible, remote
11 document verification tools and infrastruc-
12 ture, to allow for a passport transaction to
13 be completed entirely remotely.

14 (iii) To the extent possible, informa-
15 tion technology infrastructure not already
16 maintained by the Department.

17 (5)(A) The Assistant Secretary, in consultation
18 with the Chief Information Officer, shall take all
19 reasonable steps and to the maximum extent prac-
20 ticable make use of commercially-available tech-
21 nology solutions to implement additional rules-based
22 tools, including by seeking to enter into a contract
23 or contracts for such tools and their maintenance, to
24 adjudicate online passport renewal applications in
25 which no biographical information was changed for

1 citizenship, identity, and entitlement against internal
2 and commercial databases.

3 (B) The tools described in subparagraph
4 (A) shall be fully operational within 4 years of
5 the date of the enactment of this subtitle.

6 (C) The Chief Information Officer shall en-
7 sure that the use of the tools do not make pass-
8 port adjudication more vulnerable to
9 cyberattack.

10 (D) The Assistant Secretary, in consulta-
11 tion with the Chief Information Officer, shall
12 ensure that the tools described in subparagraph
13 (A) are implemented consistent with the main-
14 tenance of standards appropriate to ensuring
15 the integrity of the United States passport.

16 (c) CERTIFICATION.—In addition to other require-
17 ments in this section, not later than 30 days before the
18 Assistant Secretary begins work to procure internally any
19 of the information technology solutions described in sub-
20 section (b), the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with
21 the Chief Information Officer, shall certify to the appro-
22 priate congressional committees that—

23 (1) the reasons for procuring such service inter-
24 nally;

1 (2) the Bureau has sufficient capacity to imple-
2 ment and maintain such services; and

3 (3) the Bureau cannot procure such services for
4 significantly reduced cost externally.

5 (d) PREFERENCE.—In procuring and implementing
6 the information technology solutions described in sub-
7 section (b), preference should be given to entities with the
8 technical expertise necessary for the project and capacity
9 to deliver timely solutions.

10 (e) ROLE OF CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chief Information Offi-
12 cer's concurrence shall be required before the Assist-
13 ant Secretary awards a contract pursuant to this
14 section.

15 (2) RELATING TO SYSTEMS.—With respect to
16 the contracting and implementation of the systems
17 described in subsection (b), the Chief Information
18 Officer shall have—

19 (A) final decision making authority on the
20 technical feasibility and specifications, cyberse-
21 curity requirements, compatibility with existing
22 Department information technology infrastruc-
23 ture, and the feasibility of timelines from a
24 technical standpoint; and

1 (B) final approval of all technical matters
2 before full implementation.

3 (3) EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS.—In selecting
4 the services described in subsection (b), the Assist-
5 ant Secretary and the Chief Information Officer
6 shall include in the criteria for selection—

7 (A) the ability of the proposal to maintain
8 security, including the cybersecurity, standards
9 appropriate to the United States passport and
10 to protect personally identifiable information;

11 (B) scalability to accommodate current and
12 future passport demand; and

13 (C) long-term viability and upgradability.

14 (f) INTERIM ACTION PLAN.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
16 after the date of the enactment of this subtitle, the
17 Assistant Secretary, in consultation with the Chief
18 Information Officer, shall submit to the appropriate
19 congressional committees an action plan on how the
20 Bureau plans to complete the modernization de-
21 scribed in this section in conjunction with other re-
22 lated, ongoing steps to modernize the passport
23 issuance process.

24 (2) ELEMENTS.—The action plan required by
25 paragraph (1) shall include the following elements:

1 (A) Progress made on implementing the
2 information technology solutions described in
3 subsection (b) within specified timelines, and
4 additional steps planned.

5 (B) The expected cost and timeline for im-
6 plementation of the information technology so-
7 lutions described in subsection (b).

8 (C) An evaluation of the information tech-
9 nology solutions described in subsection (b) to
10 determine whether the full implementation of
11 such solutions will require additional funding or
12 authorities, including budget estimates and a
13 description of such authorities, as appropriate.

14 (D) Efforts to ensure world-class cyberse-
15 curity standards for protection of passport ap-
16 plicant data and the passport issuance process
17 infrastructure, particularly such infrastructure
18 involved in adjudication of passport applica-
19 tions.

20 (E) Other specific planned steps that the
21 Bureau will take to achieve the criteria de-
22 scribed in section 4.

23 (g) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 4 years after the
24 date of the enactment of this subtitle, the Assistant Sec-
25 retary, in consultation with the Chief Information Officer,

1 shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees
2 a report on the following:

3 (1) Progress on each information technology so-
4 lution described in subsection (b).

5 (2) Additional information technology solutions
6 the Bureau intends to adopt.

7 (3) Changes in the cost for implementation of
8 the steps described in the action plan, if applicable.

9 (h) FORM.—The plans and report required by this
10 section shall be submitted in an unclassified form and may
11 include a classified annex, if necessary.

12 **SEC. 17___. PASSPORT VALIDITY AMENDMENT.**

13 The Act entitled “An Act to regulate the issue and
14 validity of passports, and for other purposes”, approved
15 July 3, 1926 (44 Stat. 887; 22 U.S.C. 211a), is amend-
16 ed—

17 (1) by inserting “and, for the purpose of renew-
18 als, through the use of Department of State elec-
19 tronic systems,” after “the insular possessions of the
20 United States”; and

21 (2) by striking “person” and inserting “entity”.

22 **SEC. 17___. RESEARCH ON COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE IN-**
23 **FORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the
25 enactment of this subtitle, the Assistant Secretary, in co-

1 ordination with the Chief Information Officer, shall estab-
2 lish a working group of appropriate Department employ-
3 ees, and contractors as appropriate, to liaise with the pri-
4 vate sector for the purposes of identifying commercially
5 available technologies that may be adopted by the Bureau
6 to advance the criteria described in section 4, evaluating
7 proposed technological solutions, and augmenting the Bu-
8 reau's ongoing modernization efforts.

9 (b) COMPOSITION.—The working group established
10 pursuant to subsection (a) shall be composed of personnel
11 who can consult on the policy, legal, and technical aspects
12 of the passport issuance process with entities that wish
13 to provide such technologies to the Department.

14 (c) PILOT PROJECTS.—Not later than 180 days after
15 the date of the enactment of this subtitle, the working
16 group established pursuant to subsection (a) should con-
17 sider piloting not fewer than three commercial information
18 technology systems with potential to accelerate the pass-
19 port renewal process, reduce the backlog of requests, and
20 backup legacy systems with cloud-based software solu-
21 tions.

22 (d) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
23 of the enactment of this subtitle, the Assistant Secretary,
24 in coordination with the Chief Information Officer, shall

1 submit to the appropriate congressional committees a re-
2 port—

3 (1) describing the usefulness of the working
4 group to the Department’s ongoing modernization
5 efforts and its reception by private sector actors;

6 (2) containing a summary of each proposal
7 made to the working group pursuant to this section
8 and whether the Secretary intends to adopt each
9 proposal;

10 (3) providing recommendations to scale success-
11 ful solutions.

12 **SEC. 17___. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION FOR PASSPORT**
13 **ISSUANCE.**

14 Nothing in this subtitle may be construed as an offer
15 to procure a service or services or as a guarantee of a
16 contract for such services.

17 **SEC. 17___. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this subtitle—

19 (1) the term “appropriate congressional com-
20 mittees” means—

21 (A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and
22 the Committee on Appropriations of the House
23 of Representatives; and

1 (B) the Committee on Foreign Relations
2 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
3 Senate;

4 (2) the term “Assistant Secretary” means the
5 Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs;

6 (3) except as otherwise provided, the term “Bu-
7 reau” means the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the
8 Department;

9 (4) the term “Chief Information Officer” means
10 the Chief Information Officer of the Bureau;

11 (5) except as otherwise provided, the term “De-
12 partment” means the Department of State;

13 (6) the term “passport issuance process”—

14 (A) means all steps of passport issuance
15 for a new passport or renewal of a passport, as
16 appropriate, from the applicant’s submission of
17 documents through document processing and
18 application adjudication to mailing of printed
19 passports; and

20 (B) includes—

21 (i) the passport application submis-
22 sion, which includes—

23 (I) the portion of the passport
24 issuance process from and including
25 passport acceptance by a passport ac-

1 ceptance agent until documents are
2 received by the Department; and

3 (II) payment processing and mail
4 shipping times; and

5 (ii) the passport application proc-
6 essing, which includes the portion of the
7 passport issuance process from the recep-
8 tion of completed applications and their
9 distribution to passport agencies for adju-
10 dication until finished passports and appli-
11 cation documents are mailed to applicants;
12 and

13 (7) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary
14 of State.

