



pilot program for stateside visa renewals

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For the first time in almost 20 years, the State Department ("DOS") will launch a pilot program later this year offering visa renewal options in the US for H-1B and L-1 workers who are currently required to travel abroad.

Background

The DOS is the agency who has exclusive authority to issue visas. Currently, visas may be issued only at a US embassy or consulate abroad. Prior to 2004, however, visas could be renewed in the US with stateside processing.

As a result of the suspension of visa processing at the US consulates abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an extensive backlog of visa appointments. In an effort to reduce these bottlenecks, DOS introduced the Visa Waiver Program which expanded discretionary authority of consular officers to waive the personal appearance of nonimmigrant visa applicants under certain conditions. Immigration attorneys and business groups have urged the DOS to reintroduce stateside visa processing as an additional measure to reduce the bottlenecks abroad.

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