

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary of Homeland Security
United States Department of Homeland Security
Naval Security Station
Nebraska and Massachusetts Avenues, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Rice and Secretary Chertoff:

We are writing to express our appreciation for the progress your departments have made in improving administration of U.S. business visa policies and to encourage further action to facilitate the entry of business travelers.

As you know, since 9/11, significant changes have been made to improve the security of the visa process. These changes include increased security checks of certain visa applicants, the collection of biometric data to verify identity, and the institution of mandatory in-person interviews for most visa applicants, all of which have added time and uncertainty to the application process.

While we welcome the improvements in security these changes have brought, they have also resulted in many difficulties for U.S. companies trying to operate in a global marketplace where the ability to bring our customers, actual and potential, and our foreign employees here for brief periods is essential to remaining competitive. Companies utilize the B-1 and other visas to facilitate the entry of suppliers, customers, foreign employees, business partners, and conference and trade show participants. Simply put, these visas allow U.S. companies to conduct business with the world. Our customers and employees have choices in this highly competitive environment, and if they cannot travel to the United States or feel unwelcome here, we have quickly learned they take their business or talent elsewhere.

We have had an ongoing dialogue with officials in both your departments that has resulted in some useful improvements, and we welcome its continuation. At the same time, we have also developed a list of suggestions for additional steps we support to produce further improvements in the system. Those that can be implemented without legislation include:

- 1) Reinstitute visa revalidation by waiving the interview requirement in appropriate, low risk, cases and permitting those already working in the United States to renew visas without leaving the United States.
- 2) Undertake regular interagency review of the Technology Alert List (TAL) every two years to remove non-critical technologies and make the TAL simpler to use.

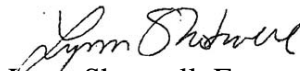
- 3) Take measures to reduce the seemingly arbitrary use of section 214(b) denials as a catch-all category by establishing specific criteria for 214(b) denial, providing for consular officer explanation of denials, and building accountability into the system.
- 4) Require use of the best practices described in State cable 225608, October 10, 2004, including establishment of a "Business Window" at posts, time block set-asides, business facilitation units, and group appointments. This would help to improve consistency of practice across posts, which remains a problem.
- 5) To the extent possible within existing budgetary constraints, prioritize increased training for consular officers, including training in the TAL and more instruction on when to send an application to Washington for an Security Advisory Opinion and when it is appropriate to make the decision in the field.

We hope that you will implement these changes in your departments. A number of them would benefit from additional resources (e.g. increased training of consular officers), and we are prepared to work with you and the Congress to ensure appropriate funds are allocated for these efforts. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss these proposals further. We will follow-up regarding this request and can also be reached through our designated point of contact on this issue, Bill Reinsch, President, National Foreign Trade Council, at (202) 887-0278 or breinsch@nftc.org.

Sincerely,



Charles Martin, President
American Chamber of Commerce-China




Lynn Shotwell, Executive Director
American Council on International Personnel



John B. Byrd III, President
The Association for Manufacturing Technology



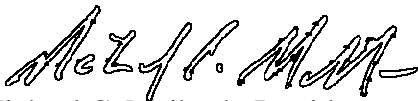
Dennis Slater, President
Association of Equipment Manufacturers



Ed Rice, President
Coalition for Employment through Exports



Gary Shapiro, President and CEO
Consumer Electronics Association



Michael C. Maibach, President and CEO
European-American Business Council



Rhett Dawson, President and CEO
Information Technology Industry Council



John Engler, President and CEO
National Association of Manufacturers



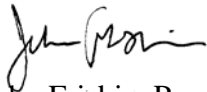
William A. Reinsch, President
National Foreign Trade Council



Ken Wasch, President
Software & Information Industry Association



Kathryn F. Hauser, U.S. Executive Director
Trans-Atlantic Business Dialogue



John Frisbie, President
U.S.-China Business Council



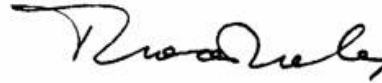
Ron Somers, President
U.S.-India Business Council



Matthew J. Flanigan, President
Telecommunications Industry Association



R. Bruce Josten, Executive Vice President
U.S. Chamber of Commerce



Thomas M.T. Niles, President
United States Council for International Business



Eugene K. Lawson, President
U.S.-Russia Business Council

The following companies have indicated they also support the views expressed in this letter:

Agilent Technologies
Applied Materials, Inc.
ArrayComm, Inc.
The Boeing Company
ChevronTexaco
Hill and Knowlton
Eastman Kodak Company
EDS
Exxon Mobil Corporation
The McGraw-Hill Companies
Motorola, Inc.
NCR Corporation
Procter and Gamble
Rockwell Automation
Rockwell Collins
Texas Instruments
Thiel Audio Products Co.
Tyco International
United Technologies Corporation