



Embassy of the United States of America
100 Duke & Young Streets, Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana

Installment One Hundred Ask the Consul – New Visa Fees

On June 4, the Department will increase the Machine-Readable Visa (MRV) fees to ensure sufficient resources meet the increasing cost of processing nonimmigrant visas (NIVs). The new MRV fee for H, L, O, P, Q and R visas will be \$150; for E visas \$390, and K visas \$350. All other categories, including B-1/B-2, F, and J, will increase to \$140.

WHY IS THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE INCREASING THE BASIC NONIMMIGRANT VISA APPLICATION FEE TO \$140 FROM \$131?

The Department is required by law to recover the cost of processing nonimmigrant visas through the collection of the MRV fee. Periodically, independent contractors conduct a Cost of Service Study to determine direct and indirect costs to the U.S. Government of providing consular services, such as nonimmigrant visa processing. Such a study was completed in June 2009 using an activity-based costing model, which is standard for estimating the cost of government services.

The study determined that the cost of accepting, adjudicating, and issuing nonimmigrant visas will be greater than \$131 in Fiscal Year 2010, which began October 1, 2009. Also, since the last fee increase in 2008, there have been new security-related costs, new IT systems have been put in place, and there is a new mandate from Congress to charge nonimmigrant visa applicants \$1 to support programs to combat trafficking in persons.

WHEN DO THE NEW PROCESSING FEES GO INTO EFFECT?

The new fees will be implemented on June 4, 2010, which is 15 days after the interim final rule was published.

WHAT IF I ALREADY PAID MY FEE FOR AN APPOINTMENT AFTER JUNE 4?

Applicants will have to pay the full fee in effect on the day they apply, regardless of when they pay. They may pay the difference at the U.S. Embassy on the day of the interview.

WHY IS THE DEPARTMENT ESTABLISHING NEW, HIGHER FEES FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF NONIMMIGRANT VISAS THAT PREVIOUSLY COST \$131, SAME AS ALL OTHER NONIMMIGRANT VISAS?

An independent study of consular operations costs shows that certain categories of nonimmigrant visas are more complicated and require more in-depth consideration than most other categories of nonimmigrant visas. Therefore, those categories of nonimmigrant visas have higher unit costs. The cost of accepting, adjudicating, and issuing the following categories of visas are appreciably higher than for other categories: E (treaty trader and investor); H (temporary worker or trainee); K (fiancé(e)); L (intracompany transferee); O (alien with extraordinary ability); P (athlete, artist or entertainer); Q (international cultural exchange visitors); and R (religious worker). Each of these visa categories requires a review of extensive documentation and a more in-depth interview of the applicant than other categories, such as tourists.

WILL THIS FEE INCREASE DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES?

The proposed fees accurately reflect the processing costs incurred and regulations require full cost recovery through fees. Past increases in nonimmigrant visa fees did not negatively impact the number of applications received worldwide. The Department is aware that this fee increase may suppress the demand for nonimmigrant visas in some countries. However, the cost is still small compared to the cost of round-trip airfare from most countries to the United States. Most visas issued worldwide are tourist visas with a validity of ten years, meaning the bearer can apply for admission to the United States any time during that ten-year period.

*“Ask the Consul” is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in *Stabroek News* and on our website at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/ask-the-consul.html> For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.*

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.