



## U.S. Visa Processing

### Taken Question

Office of the Spokesperson

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**Question:** What did the State Department do to reduce Visa Wait Times and increase visa processing capacity in the past year?

**Answer:** The Department of State welcomes Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank's [announcement](#) that 66 million international tourists visited the United States in 2012, generating an all-time record \$168 billion in revenue, an increase of 10 percent from 2011. International tourism has a significant impact on the U.S. economy, creating one new American job for every 65 visitors that we help to bring to our shores.

We are proud to have played a key role in facilitating travel for the approximately one-third of travelers to the United States each year that require a visa, all while upholding the highest standards of border security. In FY 2012, we processed 10.3 million non-immigrant visa applications and issued 8.9 million visas, a 19 percent increase over the previous year, while working through extraordinary increases in demand for visas in key markets such as Brazil, China, and Mexico.

In January 2012, the President ordered us to build capacity, leverage resources, and improve the visa application and entry process. The Department continues to meet and exceed the President's goals to attract and welcome more international visitors – visitors who create additional jobs here at home, many in the travel and tourism industry.

**Keeping Interview Wait Times Low:** Currently, more than 90 percent of applicants worldwide are interviewed within three weeks of submitting their applications. In China, consular officers have kept interview wait times to an average of five days and consular officers in Brazil have brought wait times down by 98 percent, from a high of 140 days in São Paulo, to just two days right now.

**Increased Processing Capacity:** The U.S. Missions in Brazil and China met the President's goal to increase visa processing capacity by 40 percent in 2012. In Brazil, consular officers met the target in June 2012 and in China we met the target in November 2012. By the end of 2012, we had created more than 40 new visa adjudicator positions in China and 50 in Brazil, including 43 under an innovative program that targets recruits who speak Mandarin and Portuguese.

**Streamlining the Visa Process:** A pilot program that allows consular officers to waive in-person interviews for certain nonimmigrant visa applicants renewing their visas is operational at 53 visa processing posts in 29 countries. Consular officers have already waived interviews for more than 222,000 of these low-risk visa applicants.

**Expanding Facilities:** State spent millions of dollars to upgrade and expand its existing consular facilities. In China, State will open a new consulate building in Guangzhou in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, move the consular sections in Shenyang to a larger facility, and begin processing visas in Wuhan. New consulates in Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre will open in Brazil in FY 2015.

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