

National Interest Exceptions for Certain Travelers from China, Iran, India, Brazil, South Africa, Schengen Area, United Kingdom, and Ireland

Last Updated: May 27, 2021

On May 27, 2021, the Secretary of State made a national interest determination regarding categories of travelers eligible for exceptions under Presidential Proclamations (PPs) 9984, 9992, 10143, 10199, and similar subsequent PPs related to the spread of COVID-19. As a result of this determination, together with national interest determinations already in place, travelers subject to these proclamations due to their presence in China, Iran, India, Brazil, South Africa, the Schengen area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, who are seeking to provide vital support or executive direction for critical infrastructure; those traveling to provide vital support or executive direction for significant economic activity in the United States; journalists; students and certain academics covered by exchange visitor programs; immigrants; and fiancés may now qualify for a National Interest Exception (NIE). Qualified travelers who are applying for or have valid visas or ESTA authorization may travel to the United States following the procedures below, even as PPs 9984, 9992, 10143, and 10199 remain in effect.

Travelers in categories described above who have a valid visa in the appropriate class or who have a valid ESTA authorization for travel under the Visa Waiver Program and seek to travel for purposes consistent with ESTA authorization, should contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate before traveling, if they believe they may qualify for a National Interest Exception. If a NIE is approved, they may travel on either a valid visa or ESTA authorization, as appropriate. Each approved NIE is valid for 30 days and a single trip to the United States.

Students with valid F-1 or M-1 visas traveling to begin or continue an academic program do not need to contact an embassy or consulate to seek an individual NIE to travel. They may enter the United States no earlier than 30 days before the start of their academic studies. NIE eligibility for

before the start of their academic studies. NIE eligibility for students who have been present in Brazil, China, India, Iran, or South Africa applies only to programs that begin on or after August 1, 2021. Students seeking to apply for new F-1 or M-1 visas should check the status of visa services at the nearest embassy or consulate; those applicants who are found to be otherwise qualified for an F-1 or M-1 visa will automatically be considered for an NIE to travel.

The Department of State also continues to grant NIEs for qualified travelers seeking to enter the United States for purposes related to humanitarian travel, public health response, and national security. These travelers and any others who believe their travel to be in the United States' national interest should also review the website of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for instruction on how to contact them.