LONG VISA WAIT TIMES ARE A DE FACTO TRAVEL BAN
that deters international visitors and harms American businesses and workers.
#TheyWaitWeLose

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS FROM NON-VISA WAIVER COUNTRIES ARE VITAL TO THE U.S. ECONOMY.
In 2019, 35 million (43%) of international visitors and $120 billion in spending (50%) came from countries where a visa is required to enter the United States. Brazil, India and Mexico are three of the top inbound markets that accounted for nearly 22 million (63%) of these visitors.

FIRST-TIME VISITOR VISA APPLICANTS FROM TOP INBOUND MARKETS FACE AVERAGE INTERVIEW WAIT TIMES OF MORE THAN A YEAR.
First-time B-1/B-2 applicants from the top inbound markets are facing average interview wait times of more than a year because the Biden Administration has not made it a priority to efficiently process new visitor visas.

IN 2023, THE U.S. WILL LOSE NEARLY 3 MILLION TRAVELERS AND $7 BILLION DUE TO LONG VISA WAIT TIMES.
The U.S. Travel Association forecasts that, in 2023, American businesses would attract 2.6 million fewer international visitors and $7 billion less in spending as a result of likely international travelers being unable to obtain a visitor visa in time to travel to the U.S.

SOLUTIONS

The Biden Administration must make it an economic priority to reduce interview wait times for first-time visitor visas. We urge the Biden Administration and State Department to take the following steps:

- **Set clear timelines and goals to restore efficient visa processing.**

    - Set a 21 day average goal for visa interview wait times.

- **Increase consular staffing and resources in high-volume countries and for large international events taking place in the U.S.**

    - Reach full consular staffing levels in Brazil, India and Mexico by assigning new-hires and reassigning staff with previous consular experience to these markets.

    - Extend through 2024 the authority to waive interviews for nonimmigrant visa renewals and apply waivers more broadly to low-risk B-1/B-2 renewals.

    - Set up a dedicated process to provide faster visa processing for large tour groups, conventions and events taking place in the U.S.

Congress must pass legislation to make visitor visa processing more modern and efficient. We urge Congress to develop, support and enact legislation to:

- **Authorize the State Department to test and broadly implement videoconferencing technology.** Using videoconferencing to conduct visa interviews can increase processing capacity and reduce wait times at embassies. The State Department does not currently have the authority to use remote videoconferencing for visitor visa interviews.

- **Provide permanent authorization for the State Department to broadly waive interviews for low-risk B-1/B-2 visa renewals.** The State Department only has temporary emergency authority to waive visa

interviews for low-risk B-1/B-2 renewals. Waiving renewal interviews can significantly increase the availability of in-person interview appointments for first time B-1/B-2 applicants and allow the State Department to focus on vetting new visa applicants.

- **Support legislation that requires the State Department to temporarily reassign staff to posts with the highest visitor visa wait times.** In the House, cosponsor H.R. 9141 that requires the State Department to allocate staffing to posts with the greatest need. In the Senate, introduce and support legislation that requires the State Department to allocate staffing to posts with the greatest need.

DIG DEEPER: ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON VISITOR VISA WAIT TIMES

VISA WAIT TIMES ARE AT RECORD HIGHS

In May 2023, nearly one year after inbound travel restrictions were lifted by the U.S., the largest inbound travel markets requiring visitor visas faced average interview wait times exceeding 400 days. As wait times soar, international visitation from many of these countries continue to lag behind 2019 levels, including:

- **BRAZIL** // Avg. wait times of 527 days
- **INDIA** // Avg. wait times of 406 days
- **MEXICO** // Avg. wait times of 647 days

THE U.S. IS LOSING MILLIONS OF TRAVELERS AND BILLIONS OF TOURIST DOLLARS TO OTHER COUNTRIES

A new Morning Consult survey of likely international travelers found that of those who have at least some interest in visiting the U.S., but do not have a valid U.S. visa, the majority would likely choose another country to visit if wait times exceeded a year, including 61% of **BRAZILIANS**, 71% of **INDIANS** and 66% of **MEXICANS**.

According to a U.S. Travel Association analysis of the survey results, the U.S. is losing the opportunity to compete for millions of visitors and billions in spending from international travelers who say they won't tolerate long visa wait times and will choose another country to visit instead. In Brazil, India and Mexico alone, the U.S. is losing the ability to compete for:
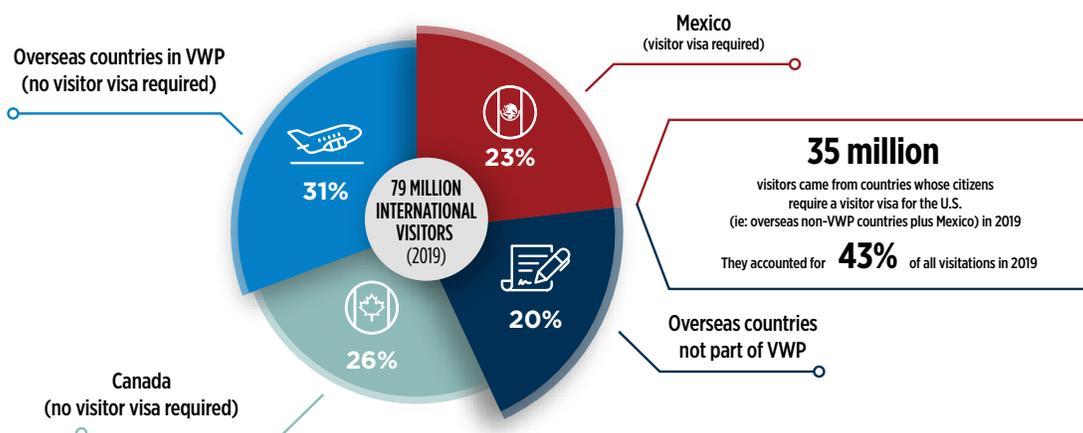
- **BRAZIL** // 6 million visitors // $15.6 billion
- **INDIA** // 3.5 million visitors // $13.3 billion
- **MEXICO** // 7.1 million visitors // $4.1 billion

THE STATE DEPARTMENT CAN ACCELERATE RECOVERY OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL BY LOWERING INTERVIEW WAIT TIMES TO 21 DAYS OR LESS.

According to Tourism Economics, if visa interview wait times are lowered to less than 30 days, international visitation to the U.S. would accelerate by 2.2 million visitors and $5.2 billion in spending within 6 months.

See next page for additional data and insights

Overseas countries in VWP (no visitor visa required) — 31%

Mexico (visitor visa required) — 23%

79 MILLION INTERNATIONAL VISITORS (2019)

Canada (no visitor visa required) — 26%

Overseas countries not part of VWP — 20%

35 million visitors came from countries whose citizens require a visitor visa for the U.S. (ie: overseas non-VWP countries plus Mexico) in 2019

They accounted for **43%** of all visitations in 2019

Inbound Market	Rank Among Top Inbound Markets	2019 Visitation Volume	2019 Spending in U.S. in Billions (Total Travel Exports)	Avg. Visa Interview Wait Time in Days (As of 5/18/23)	2019 Non-Immigrant Visas Issued in 'Visitation' Categories
MEXICO	2	18,328,181	$17.6	647	1,137,480
CHINA (EXCL. HONG KONG)	5	2,829,970	$33.2	116	1,060,604
BRAZIL	7	2,104,617	$10.2	527	573,028
INDIA	10	1,473,517	$14.2	406	501,136
COLOMBIA	13	944,013	$3.3	759	196,423
ARGENTINA	15	854,442	$3.4	78	211,496
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	19	488,703	$1.7	398	89,494
ECUADOR	21	456,741	No BEA Data	335	172,823
ISRAEL	23	450,572	$2.0	144	172,979
VENEZUELA	24	400,530	$1.5	Closed	3,693

WHY WAIT? Of the top 10 global destinations, Brazilians can travel to eight countries and Mexicans to six countries without a visa interview. Meanwhile, average wait times for travelers who need a visa to visit the U.S. exceeds one year.

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