

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell voted today to boost funding for the U.S. State Department to address the backlog of domestic passport applications. The bill, H.R. 2764, the FY 2008 State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, would create 122 additional positions to deal with the backlog, as well as ask the State Department to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the number of passport applications it has received, the number of applications awaiting approval, and the average processing time for each category of passport application. H.R. 2754 passed the House by a vote of 241 to 178.

"My office hears from constituents almost daily who are having trouble getting passports," said Mitchell. "When people apply on-time, they shouldn't have to cancel trips because of a backlog. We need to give the State Department the resources it needs to process passport applications in a timely manner."

New travel restrictions have caused a significant increase in the number of annual passport applications. According to the U.S. State Department, passport applications are now taking as long as 12 weeks to process. Prior to the increase in passport demand, it took approximately six weeks to receive a passport. The expedited service can now take up to four weeks to complete.

In January, the United States began requiring U.S. citizens to use passports for travel outside of the country by air, including to Mexico and Canada. In response to a growing backlog of passport applications, the Bush Administration announced earlier this month that it would suspend the implementation of this requirement. [Source: [Washington Post](#), June 7, 2007]

A second phase of increased travel restrictions was scheduled to begin in January 2008, when U.S. citizens would be required to use passports for both land and air travel outside of the United States. However, last week, the Bush Administration announced it would postpone implementation of this requirement as well. [Source: [New York Times](#), June 21, 2007]

Last week, the House passed legislation to formally extend the deadline for implementing the second phase of the United States' increased travel restrictions to June 2008 as part of the FY 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, H.R. 2638. Mitchell voted in favor of the bill, which passed by a vote of 268 to 150, including Mitchell's Fifth District residents who have already applied for passports and are now within two weeks of travel can contact Mitchell's Scottsdale office to expedite their applications. The office can be reached at (480) 946-2411.

Mitchell's office assists approximately 25 passport applicants daily.