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## Reports: Visa Delays and Unprecedented Wait Times Cause Problems for Workers, Employers

**Legal Update**

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*This article was prepared with the assistance of ABIL, the Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers, of which Loan Huynh, Fredrikson Immigration Department Chair, is a member.*

According to reports, visa delays, backlogs and unprecedented wait times at U.S. embassies and consulates are causing disruptions for workers and companies, particularly those employing workers in temporary statuses who need to renew their visas outside the U.S.

For example, excluding student and visitor visas, wait times for visas in Istanbul, Turkey, exceed 16 months; in New Delhi, India, wait times hover at nine months for the thousands of highly skilled temporary workers coming to the U.S. on H-1B and L-1 visas. Business visa processing in Chile can take up to three years.

The delays are thought to be at least partly the result of increased travel demand related to the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing issues at embassies and consulates, and a two-year shutdown of processing guest worker visas by the Trump administration. Some business groups and immigration attorneys advocate measures such as allowing remote interviews or permitting those with expiring visas to renew in the U.S. rather than requiring them to leave the country as a way of relieving backlogs. Reportedly, the Department of State (DOS) is considering such options. Meanwhile, DOS said it has doubled hiring of consular staff in fiscal year (FY) 2022 over FY 2021 and noted that “[n]early all U.S. embassies and consulates have resumed full visa services.”