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Fact Sheet: Biometric Passport Requirement for VWP Countries

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) and the Travel Business Roundtable (TBR) have worked closely with several travel industry companies and trade associations to lobby for changes to the biometric passport requirement for Visa Waiver Program countries. While the travel industry strongly supports the inclusion of biometric identifiers in travel documents to enhance border security and facilitate travel, we have always argued for a realistic timeline that avoids any major disruption of inbound travel from these crucial markets.

In 2004, Congress granted a one-year extension of this deadline (which then became October 26, 2005) following intense industry lobbying and a request from the Administration for an even longer (two-year) extension. Earlier this year (2005) we continued to lobby for an extension of the biometric passport deadline since several Visa Waiver Program countries that are major inbound international travel markets to the United States were unlikely to meet this new deadline.

Following extensive lobbying by the industry, and meetings between the Bush Administration and Congress, agreement was reached on a plan that extended the biometric passport (also referred to as an e-passport) deadline until October 26, 2006, while introducing a new interim security requirement that VWP countries include securely embedded digital photos in their passports issued after October 26, 2005.

This new, interim security requirement concerning digital photos is able to be met by 24 of the 27 VWP countries. Only Austria, France and Italy needed to make changes to meet this new rule. As of mid-October 2005, federal officials report that Italy should be able to make the deadline and include digital photos in their passports on or very shortly after the October 26, 2005 deadline. France will reportedly skip pass this interim requirement and begin to issue biometric (e-Passports) passports on December 1, 2005, while in Austria it will take an additional 8-9 months to incorporate digital photos in their passports.

The U.S. Department of State will conduct public affairs outreach efforts in Austria, France and Italy to communicate to prospective visitors about this interim security requirement. TIA remains confident this interim rule will have very little, if any, impact on inbound international travel to the United States.

[Travel Business Roundtable](#)
[Joint Letter to Congress](#)

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[Biometric Passport Requirements](#)

TIA and Industry partners have been working with Congress on a possible deadline extension for the biometric passport requirement for Visa Waiver Program countries. [Find the latest news on this pressing issue here!](#)

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