

BACKGROUND: Following 9/11, the United States rightly put in place a series of new travel security requirements at air and land ports of entry. The U.S. struggled, however, to strike the right balance between increased security and sensible investments in travel facilitation programs. As a result, a perception has grown among international travelers that the U.S. has one of the world's worst entry systems. Foreign visitors cite lengthy lines, an unwelcoming environment and confusing entry requirements as some of the biggest problems.

In January 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff created a pilot "model airport" program to reduce passenger processing wait times and establish a more welcoming environment at inspection areas. The pilot program was subsequently launched at Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD). In 2007, Congress fully authorized a Model Ports Program and appropriated \$40 million to expand it to the 20 U.S. airports with the highest number of international visitors and hire no fewer than 200 new Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at these model airports. DHS reports it has begun several new initiatives to improve passenger processing as part of the Model Ports Program, but measurable improvement across the 20 chosen airports has been extremely limited.

ISSUES FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

1. **Process Passengers More Efficiently:** In order to improve security screening and address the long delays at airports during passenger processing, Congress appropriated funding to hire 200 new CBP officers at airports in FY08 and 173 new CBP officers at airports in FY09. To date, it is unknown if DHS has deployed any of these new CBP officers to the 20 model airports. Furthermore, duplicative information gathering procedures at the port of entry unnecessarily increase processing times.

Action Items:

- Newly hired CBP Officers must be trained and deployed to the model ports expeditiously.
- Additional funding is needed to erase the CBP Officer staffing shortfall at airports.
- To efficiently distribute new staff to the model airports, CBP must put in place the appropriate metrics to accurately measure wait times and establish staffing requirements to meet specific wait time goals.
- CBP should eliminate the paper I-94 Arrival-Departure Record because it already collects all relevant data through APIS and US-VISIT.

2. **Establish Customer Service and Professionalism Training Standards and Metrics:** While CBP officials are first and foremost law enforcement officers, security and customer service are not mutually exclusive. CBP announced recently it has begun a new professionalism program to improve customer service training for CBP officers.

Action Items:

- Customer service and professionalism must be a core element of the CBP training program. CBP should partner with the private sector to develop and sustain such programs.

- Metrics to measure the customer service performance of CBP Officers should be included in this new program.
3. **Create a More Welcoming Environment:** New signage has been developed and two videos have been created to welcome incoming visitors and guide them through the Customs process. The first video was produced by CBP to guide travelers as they complete required forms and navigate through the screening process. The second video was produced by Walt Disney Parks and Resorts and welcomes guests by depicting sites and citizens from across the United States. Houston and Dulles currently utilize the new signage and videos as well as employ special service representatives with multiple language capabilities to greet and assist passengers. In early 2008, Congress appropriated funds to place flat-screen television monitors at the remaining 18 model airports. DHS has been slow to issue a contract for and erect the new monitors. CBP estimates that all monitors will not be installed until August 2009.

Action Items:

- CBP must make available new signage and work quickly to install the new screens at the remaining 18 model airports.
 - Each model port should employ special service representatives in the Federal Inspection Services (FIS) area to greet, provide language assistance and assistance with forms to arriving passengers.
4. **Create Greater Public-Private Cooperation:** DHS has described the Model Ports Program as “a joint venture among federal agencies, the travel industry, airlines and airport authorities.” The airports, airlines, Department of State, Transportation Security Administration, travel industry and local officials play critical roles in the airport entry process, and all of these groups must work collaboratively to effect positive change in the system.

Action Items:

- By collaborating among stakeholders and utilizing the expertise of private companies, for instance, through a Loaned Executive Program currently seeking approval at DHS, program-specific goals, metrics and best practices can more easily be developed and implemented.
- CBP, TSA and the Department of State should participate in regular Model Ports Program meetings to ensure that best practices across agencies and departments are coordinated so that visitors are greeted consistently with “one face at the border.”
- The private sector should be a partner with the government to run a coordinated national communications campaign to educate travelers about processing improvements as they occur. The new Administration should fully support passage of H.R. 3232 (as introduced in the 110th Congress), the Travel Promotion Act, which would create a multi-million dollar campaign to explain security programs to foreign travelers.