

EXPANDING THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM, ENHANCING TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:35 p.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Robert Wexler (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you everyone for being patient. The Subcommittee on Europe will come to order. I want to thank Mr. Delahunt for being patient as well as the witnesses.

We have called today's hearing to highlight what I think many people understand to be a critical issue that is at the top of the transatlantic agenda, the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.

Last November, President Bush made the very bold announcement when he declared his support for the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program during the NATO Summit in Latvia. The President supports an expansion of this program because it has provided incalculable benefits for our economy in the United States, and our bilateral relationship with many of the individual European countries, as well as the Continent of Europe as a whole. It has also strengthened tourism and business opportunities for American citizens and business who are awarded visa-free travel to European countries in the program.

In 2005, more than 18 million people entered the United States under the program to conduct business, education, travel, and visit friends and family. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that the Visa Waiver Program leads to \$66 billion in spending in our economy each year. President Bush's call to expand this program has been greeted enthusiastically by our European allies. A little over 3 weeks ago, the White House, President Bush and German Chancellor Merkel, along with EU officials, discussed the importance of expanding the Visa Waiver Program during the U.S.-EU summit.

Their message, similar to the one that I have received over the past 6 months in discussions with European heads of state, foreign ministers, and several ambassadors here in Washington, was crystal clear. Expanding the Visa Waiver Program to include all EU countries is an essential component to the overall U.S.-EU relationship and transatlantic cooperation.

I share the position of the Bush administration and the European Union that expansion of this program would enhance the se-

curity of the United States by strengthening cooperation on counterterrorism and information-sharing activities, given the countries participating in the program must meet the highest standards of passport and airport security.

Expansion of this program would also greatly benefit relations with some of our most cherished global partners such as Israel, Greece, and South Korea, as well as our many allies in the war on terror. They include Hungary, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic and others who have committed troops, police officers' funding and material support to our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is essential that we in the Congress and the administration show our gratitude for the sacrifice of these nations. We should be strengthening ties with countries that have stood bravely at our side in combat, and are willing to collect and share sensitive information to combat international terrorism.

This is why I have introduced legislation that would enhance security measures regarding the Visa Waiver Program and expand the program to many of our allies. This legislation would make countries eligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program if they meet strict requirements relating to progressive reduction of their non-immigrant visa refusal rates, if they do not compromise the security or welfare of the United States, and if they have fully cooperated in counterterrorism and information-sharing initiatives.

Given that there have been several Visa Waiver Programs introduced in the 110 Congress, it is clear that there is strong interest amongst many members of the House to expand this program while at the same time ensuring America's security.

At this point in time, I would encourage my colleagues to consider all of the Visa Waiver Program bills and initiatives that are before us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wexler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT WEXLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE

I have called for today's hearing to highlight a critical issue that is at the top of the transatlantic agenda—expansion of the Visa Waiver Program. As many of you are aware, last November, President Bush made a bold announcement when he declared his support for the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program during the NATO Summit in Latvia.

The President supports an expansion of this program because it has provided incalculable benefits for our economy and our bilateral relationships with European allies. It has also strengthened tourism and business opportunities for American citizens, who are awarded visa-free travel to European countries in the program. In 2005, more than 18 million people entered the United States under the program to conduct business, education, travel, and visit friends and family. The US Chamber of Commerce estimates that the visa waiver program leads to 66 billion dollars spending annually in our economy.

President Bush's call to expand this program has been greeted enthusiastically by our European allies. A little over three weeks ago at the White House, President Bush and German Chancellor Angela Merkel along with EU officials discussed the importance of expanding the Visa Waiver Program during the US-EU summit. Their message, like the one I have received over the past six months in discussions with other European heads of state, Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors was crystal clear: expanding the visa waiver program—to include all EU countries—is an essential component to the overall US-EU relationship and transatlantic cooperation.

I share the position of the Bush Administration and the European Union that expansion of this program would enhance the security of the US by strengthening cooperation on counterterrorism and information-sharing activities given that countries participating in the program must meet the highest standards of passport- and

airport security. Expansion of this program would also greatly benefit relations with some of our most important global partners such as Israel, Greece and South Korea as well as many of our allies in the war on terror including Hungary, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic and others who have committed troops, police officers, funding and material support to missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is essential that United States Congress and the Administration show our gratitude for the sacrifice of these nations. We should be strengthening ties with countries that have stood bravely by our side in combat and are willing to collect and share sensitive information to combat international terrorism.

This is why I have introduced legislation that would enhance the security measures of the visa waiver program and expand the program to our allies. This legislation would make countries eligible to participate in the visa waiver program, if they meet strict requirements relating to progressive reduction of their nonimmigrant visa refusal rates, if they do not compromise the security or welfare of the United States, and if they have fully cooperated in counterterrorism and information sharing initiatives. Given that there have been several Visa Waiver Program bills introduced in the 110th Congress it is clear that there is a strong interest to expand this program while at the same time ensuring America's security.

While it is essential that the United States play defense when it comes to securing our borders from terrorism—we must also be prepared to go on the offensive and seize the opportunity to expand the visa waiver program in order to enhance the Transatlantic alliance and our nations security. The importance of this program can not be overstated or overestimated. I urge my colleagues to support legislation expanding the visa waiver program and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

I would now like to call on my colleague, Congressman Elton Gallegly, the Ranking Member of the Europe subcommittee, for his opening remarks.

Mr. WEXLER. Now I would like to call on my colleagues, Congressman Elton Gallegly, the ranking member of the Europe Subcommittee, for his opening remarks.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing of the Subcommittee on Europe for the Visa Waiver Program and its impact on relations with our European allies.

In the past several months, this subcommittee has held six hearings, three of which have been joint hearings with other subcommittees of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In my view, this hearing could also have been considered as a joint hearing with the subcommittee chaired by our mutual friend, Representative Sherman, that has jurisdiction over the counterterrorism efforts.

I say this because, while I recognize that the Visa Waiver Program is an important issue in our bilateral relations with 12 European Union countries that want to participate in the program, it is also true that we cannot evaluate the merits of expanding the Visa Waiver Program without considering the national security implications of such a move.

Therefore, at this point I can't support any expansion of the Visa Waiver Program unless it is a part of a comprehensive immigration reform package that includes provisions that will secure our borders. This must include the implementation of an entry/exit system so we can determine if all foreign visitors, including visa waiver travelers, leave the U.S. in compliance with their visa terms.

However, Mr. Chairman, before yielding, I would like to ask unanimous consent to consider to enter into the record my full statement as well as a statement from our friend, Representative John Shimkus, who is the co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus. Representative Shimkus and I have different views on this issue. However, he has worked hard on the issue, and I did want his proposal to be part of the record of the hearing today.

While I disagree with Mr. Shimkus' statement at this particular point in time, I don't disagree with his desire to have the Baltic countries enter. President Adamkus and I have discussed this at length in the past. I have incredible respect for him, as I do many of the other countries that want to participate in this. However, as I have mentioned, with the dynamics of our national security and the current status of the immigration problems that we have in this country, unfortunately, I think the timing is wrong. I look forward to hearing our witnesses today, and I appreciate the job you are doing, Mr. Chairman. I want to continue to work with you, although we may have a little different opinion on how we approach this from a timing standpoint. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gallegly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELTON GALLEGLY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing in the Europe Subcommittee on the visa waiver program and its impact on our relations with our European allies.

In the past several months, this subcommittee has held six hearings, three of which have been joint hearings with other subcommittees of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In my view, this hearing could also have been conducted as a joint hearing with the subcommittee chaired by Representative Sherman that has jurisdiction over counter-terrorism efforts. I say this because while we recognize that the visa waiver program is an important issue in our bi-lateral relations with the twelve European Union countries that want to participate in the program, it is also true that we cannot evaluate the merits of expanding the visa waiver program without considering the national security implications of such a move.

There is no doubt regarding the importance of the visa waiver program to our nation's travel and tourism industry and to the American economy. In 2005, almost 16 million people came to our country as a result of this program. This represents almost 50% of all temporary visitors to the United States. Clearly, the visa waiver program is a vital part of the \$645 billion U.S. travel industry.

However, I also believe that Congress and the Administration should tread very carefully before we do anything that would lead to more people entering the United States without first having to undergo a face-to-face interview with one of our professionals located in a U.S. consulate overseas.

Therefore, at this point, I will not support any expansion of the visa waiver program unless it is a part of a comprehensive immigration reform package that includes provisions that will secure our borders. This must include the implementation of an entry-exit system so we can determine if all foreign visitors, including visa waiver travelers, leave the U.S. in compliance with their visa terms.

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security must institute a system to permit our ports-of-entry to immediately access information on lost and stolen passports. I find it difficult to accept that almost six years after 9-11, our inspectors at the border and at airports still do not have real time access to this information.

Mr. Chairman, before yielding I would like to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record my full statement, as well as a statement by Representative John Shimkus, who is the Co-Chair of the House Baltic Caucus. Representative Shimkus and I have different views on this issue. However, he has worked hard on this issue and I did want his proposals to be made a part of the official record of this hearing.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back.

Mr. WEXLER. I want to thank the ranking member and, there being no objection, the letter or statement from Mr. Shimkus will be entered into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE JOHN SHIMKUS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

I would like to thank Chairman Wexler and Ranking Member Gallegly for allowing me to submit a statement to this important hearing on the Visa Waiver Program.

As you may know, I am a Co-Chair of the House Baltic Caucus and have been very involved in that area of the world since coming to Congress. I am extraordinarily proud of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania's emergence into strong democracies after escaping from a Soviet controlled communist regime.

My involvement in US-Baltic relations has allowed me to see first hand the problems with the Visa Waiver Program and the unfairness in its application. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established security procedures years ahead of the United States and many western European countries including biometric passport standards and entry-exit monitoring systems.

My colleague Mr. Emanuel and I have introduced a piece of legislation that will both modernize the Visa Waiver Program while enhancing security requirements the US and our allies rather than allow entry into the program solely on the annual number of visa applications denied by the U.S.

Our reform bill creates programmatic standards and strengthens our common security with new safeguards tied to security data weighed against passport information presented by visitors to and from the U.S. Further, H.R. 1543 reflects the visa waiver provisions approved by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in S.4 before floor consideration.

It is important to note that our bill does not automatically prevent Visa Waiver Program consideration based on a country's visa refusal rate. Rather, it reforms the Visa Waiver Program through extensive new requirements for country-by-country review and further advances the substantial improvements in security capacity.

I sincerely want to thank the Foreign Affairs Committee for bringing attention to this important issue and I hope to make myself available to any Members that have questions or concerns regarding H.R. 1543 in the future.

Mr. WEXLER. With that, we will move to both of the witnesses. In response to the ranking member, we were agreeing way too much for either one of us to be comfortable, so it is good to have a disagreement every so often.

Mr. GALLEGLY. It doesn't happen often.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay. Do any of the other members have opening statements with which they wish to proceed? We will start with Mr. Delahunt in that he was here first. Mr. Delahunt, of course, chairs the International Organization, Human Rights, and Oversight Subcommittee.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the chairman for allowing me to sit at the dais with him and my other colleagues. I would just simply associate myself with your remarks, Mr. Chairman. I think this is an extremely critical issue. I think it is an issue that, if we pursue your legislation, we will enhance our security as well as the obvious economic benefits. This is as much about our efforts to work with nations who embrace our shared concerns and values, to reduce the occasion or the potential for terrorism. It makes a lot of sense, and it obviously is a great investment in terms of restoring America's image in the world.

The series of hearings that I have held in my subcommittee have indicated that those who come and visit us, return back to their own countries with a very favorable view of America and Americans. Given the low standard of the United States today in terms of global opinion, it provides us an opportunity, I dare say, to enhance and restore America's image, which helps us in the war on terror.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Would the gentleman yield for just a second?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of course.

Mr. GALLEGLY. I can't help but respond to the comment about how we have such a low rating universally around the world. While we understand that there are probably a number of reasons why we may not be as popular as we would like to be, I would like to submit to the gentleman even with that image around the world

we still have more people that legally emigrate, wanting to get into this country every year than all of the rest of the countries in the world combined. In fact, last year it was, I believe, 1.3 million legally, plus another probably 3 million that are trying to beat the door down to get into this country.

The question that I would pose: If we are so universally disliked, why do so many people wanted to come here?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Because it is still the best, Mr. Gallegly.

Mr. GALLEGLY. You answered.

Mr. DELAHUNT. The reality is we want to maintain that standing. To have surveys done by our own Government Accountability Office that indicate anti-American sentiment is putting us at risk in the war on terror and is denying the American economy the benefits of which I think all of us are aware.

For example, in the year 2005, our share of the tourism and travel industry, as far as our economy, translated into a loss of some \$43 billion. That includes the states that we all represent.

So I think the proposal that has been put forward by the chair of the committee not just benefits our economy, it also benefits our image and assists us in terms of dealing with terrorism worldwide.

I thank the gentleman for his comments and his observations. I yield back.

Mr. WEXLER. I thank both gentlemen.

Mr. Sires?

Mr. SIRES. I have no comments.

Mr. WEXLER. Ms. Sánchez?

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. I was just going to say in the interest of time that I will submit an opening statement for the record, and we can jump into the testimony.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much.

Also submitted for the record is a statement by Representative Emanuel and a statement by the Hungarian Ambassador, Ms. Simonyi. No objection. Both statements will be accepted into the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE RAHM EMANUEL, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Chairman Wexler, Ranking Member Gallegly

Thank you for holding this important hearing on the Visa Waiver Program.

The Visa Waiver Program is a forward-thinking program that gives foreign citizens the opportunity to visit family and friends and do business in this country. The program helps us maintain our traditionally close economic and cultural ties with our allies around the world.

But the Visa Waiver Program must be updated to meet the challenges of new global security threats.

With the support of my fellow Illinoisan, Congressman Shimkus, I have introduced bipartisan legislation to modernize this program and ensure it continues to be effective, safe and secure.

H.R. 1543, the Visa Waiver Modernization Act will modernize the entire Visa Waiver Program in a comprehensive manner. It will enhance U.S. national security procedures, improve diplomatic relations, and boost the economy.

This legislation will give more countries the opportunity to be included in the Visa Waiver Program while simultaneously enhancing the security standards for all participating countries. The bill provides that Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of State, have the necessary authority, flexibility, and discretion to expand the existing Visa Waiver Program, based on participants' ability to meet new extensive security and immigration requirements.

Foreign countries would only become eligible for program after the executive branch certifies that they have met the security criteria and do not pose a security, law enforcement, or immigration concern to the U.S.

The legislation will also require existing and new countries to implement enhanced travel security requirements. These common security standards would put in place strict limits on illegal entry and severely impede travel by terrorists and transnational criminals.

By giving additional countries the opportunity to participate in the Visa Waiver Program, we give each country an incentive to modernize their security capacity.

Following are key highlights of our bill:

- *New Travel Security Requirements:* The legislation will require existing and new program countries to implement enhanced travel security requirements to establish common standards and policies to limit illegal entry and impede travel by terrorists and transnational criminals. The security standards for participation in the program will include the use of electronic passports with biometric information, instituting an electronic authorization travel system, stricter passenger screening procedures and passenger information sharing, prompt reporting of lost, stolen, and fraudulent travel documents, home country repatriation of any visitors violating U.S. law, and airport security standards that will better address threats in the post 9/11 environment. If standards are not met, program country status could be revoked.
- *Improving Bilateral Relationships with Key Allies:* The legislation will have the added security benefit of improving and strengthening important bilateral relationships with key NATO Allies and contributors to operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Global War on Terror.
- *Incentive for Accelerating Cooperation on Counterterrorism and Information Sharing:* requires as a condition for program participation prior and continued counterterrorism cooperation and information sharing that will address key national security concerns for the United States and will aid U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in combating terrorist activity.
- *Preventing Overstays:* The legislation will also require the United States to monitor when Visa Waiver Program participants exit the country and improve procedures for measuring any potential overstays, to ensure compliance with the program. Capturing information upon exit, not just entry, is an important aspect of our border management system. The amendment will set a firm deadline for DHS to complete this exit solution.
- *Shifting U.S. Resources to High-Risk Areas:* By bringing the low-risk countries into the Visa Waiver Program and requiring their increased cooperation on counterterrorism and compliance with key security standards, the United States government could target its limited consular resources to geographic areas more critical to our national security.

Our shores should always be open to citizens from other countries here to visit their friends and families. We should give the opportunity to others who have proven they can meet the new security challenges we face together as allies in the war on terror.

Together, we can ensure that the United States remains open and free, but safe and secure from criminal threats and national security concerns.

Thank you for holding this important hearing today.

May 21, 2007

The Honorable Robert Wexler
Chairman, Europe Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Wexler,

As Ambassadors and Chiefs of Mission from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, we are writing to express our sincere concern about the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) reform provision included in S.4 during Senate floor consideration. As strong allies of the United States, we believe that the free flow of citizens and EU–U.S. business and tourism through open and secure travel is essential to the strengthening of social, diplomatic, and economic ties between our countries.

Our seven countries are solidly united behind reforming the VWP in a way that is consistent with our common security and economic goals, as well as our shared desire to facilitate easier exchange of our citizens. We believe that success in this endeavor is a critical tool in strengthening our transatlantic alliance and the creation of a united Europe.

Currently, a number of European Union (EU) and NATO member countries—our countries included—are not part of the VWP. Consequently, our citizens must obtain a visa for travel to the U.S., while U.S. citizens travel visa-free throughout the EU. This visa inequity not only impedes significant personal as well as commercial exchange, but also has become a high-profile public issue in our countries.

Visa waiver reform, as it currently stands in the Senate bill, takes a significant step towards rectifying this inequity. However, if it is not amended further in conference, the bill will effectively exclude the majority of our countries from the VWP. Our goal is legislation that waives visa refusal rate requirements for countries that meet security and counter-terrorism standards and have a sustained reduction in visa refusal rates.

The House of Representatives has not had the opportunity to debate or vote on visa waiver reform in the current Congress. To this end, we urge you to co-sponsor and actively work for the Emanuel-Shimkus bill: H.R. 1543 – Visa Waiver Modernization Act. This legislation focuses on increasing the security of the U.S. and its allies through up-to-date and “smart” security measures rather than on the annual number of visa applications denied by the U.S. This reform bill creates programmatic standards and strengthens our common security with new safeguards tied to security data weighed against passport information presented by visitors to and from the U.S. Further, H.R. 1543 reflects the visa waiver provisions approved by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in S.4 before floor consideration.

Emanuel-Shimkus does not automatically prevent VWP consideration based on a country’s visa refusal rate. Rather, it reforms the VWP through extensive new requirements for country-by-country review and further advances the substantial improvements in security capacity. We urge you to support Visa Waiver Program reform by co-sponsoring H.R. 1543.

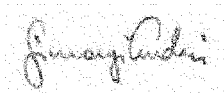
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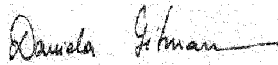
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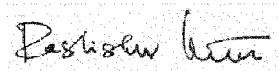
Hungary – Ambassador Andras Simonyi



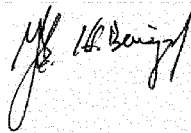
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Mr. WEXLER. I would now like to introduce our witnesses for today's hearing. Our first witness is Mr. Stephen "Tony" Edson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services in the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the Department of State.

Mr. Edson joined the Foreign Service in 1981. Prior to his current position, he served as Managing Director for Visa Services and Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning to the Visa Services Department from 2001 until 2005.

Our second witness will be Mr. Nathan Sales, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Policy Development in the Office of Policy at the Department of Homeland Security.

Prior to working for DHS, Mr. Sales served as counsel in the Office of Legal Policy at the Department of Justice from 2001 until he joined the Department of Homeland Security.

Both gentlemen, we would request if you could limit your statements to 5 minutes, that would be terrific.

Mr. Edson, please begin.

STATEMENT OF MR. STEPHEN A. "TONY" EDSON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VISA SERVICES, BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. EDSON. Thank you, Chairman Wexler, Ranking Member Gallegly, and distinguished members of the committee.

I am delighted to be here this afternoon and appreciate this opportunity to discuss the important implications on our transatlantic relations of the possible expansion of the Visa Waiver Program.

In November of last year, the President stated his intent to work with Congress to reform the Visa Waiver Program to strengthen security at home and abroad, and to facilitate the ability of certain of our international allies who qualify to join the program. Congress is considering security enhancements, such as an electronic travel authorization, strengthening reporting of lost and stolen passports, requiring acceptance of repatriated aliens, and passenger information exchange. We stand ready and available to consult with Congress as this legislation moves forward.

As I have testified previously, together with our colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security, we strive constantly to strike the right balance between protecting America's borders and preserving America's welcome to international visitors. We must guard our fundamental openness to the world that is a source of our strength and sense of ourselves.

As we pursue these dual goals, we do so in partnership with other countries, and above all the countries, the participants in the Visa Waiver Program.

The Visa Waiver Program was established in 1986 to promote tourism and trade. Today, nearly half of all business and tourism trips to the United States from outside North America are taken by travelers under the VWP. The Departments of State and Homeland Security work closely on the VWP. We work with the Office of International Enforcement at DHS, which has primary responsibility for overseeing this program, while our role is primarily consultant.

Over 80 percent of the current VWP participants and nearly all of the ASPRN countries are European, so let me elaborate a moment on our relations there.

We have very close foreign policy, commercial and cultural ties to Europe, and the VPW programs a foundation on which those ties can flourish. The United States and Europe form a united community of values, interests, and responsibilities. Our identities are bound up in our commitments to human rights, rule of law, freedoms of religion and the press, and to market economics.

In commerce, the United States-European trade and investment relationship is the largest in the world. Transatlantic trade totals over \$500 billion annually, and the United States and the European Union are the largest investors in each other's markets. Of

the \$5 trillion in foreign assets owned by United States companies, nearly 60 percent are in Europe. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of all foreign direct investment in the United States comes from EU investors. United States-owned affiliates in Europe employ 6 million workers, and over 4 million Americans work for European companies.

These statistics reinforce the transatlantic connection that serves both continents. Our foreign policy continuously strives to support and strengthen this relationship.

The VWP provides proven and important benefits to the United States. The administration and Members of Congress also recognize, however, that it needs to be modernized to take into account the realities of the post-9/11 world. As we contemplate new requirements that could permit other countries to join the Visa Waiver Program, there is an opportunity to enhance the program to demonstrate our cooperation with international allies and to enhance transportation security domestically and around the world.

Our efforts to facilitate legitimate travel to the United States while protecting the security of this nation will continue.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with our partner agencies and with you toward that goal. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Edson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. STEPHEN A. "TONY" EDSON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VISA SERVICES, BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Wexler, Ranking Member Gallegly and distinguished members of the Committee, I am delighted to be here this afternoon and appreciate this opportunity to discuss the important implications of the possible expansion of the Visa Waiver Program on our international relations.

In November of last year, in Tallinn, Estonia, President Bush announced his initiative to revamp and strengthen the Visa Waiver Program. As the President said to the people of Estonia, it is time to modify and strengthen the program by upgrading our ability within the program to screen individual travelers.

The Administration is therefore seeking your support to enhance the security requirements of the program to strengthen the safety of the United States and of the people who travel here. As the President said in Tallinn, the proposal seeks to use modern technology to improve our ability to screen travelers. Twenty-first century threats require us to assess individuals, not merely countries, as they seek to travel to the United States.

The leaders of new democracies of Europe have told President Bush repeatedly of the desire of the citizens of their countries to travel visa-free to the United States. The Administration heard their concerns. If I might quote the President from his statement with President Ilves: "We want people to come to our country. . . . It's in our nation's interest that people be able to come and visit, and it's important, at the same time, to make sure that those who want to continue to kill Americans aren't able to exploit the system."

As I have testified previously, together with our colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), we strive constantly both to protect America's borders and preserve America's welcome to international visitors and our fundamental openness to the world that is the source of our strength and sense of ourselves. As we pursue these dual goals, we do so in partnership with other countries, above all with the participants in the Visa Waiver Program.

As security requirements are enhanced, admitting new countries to the VWP will strengthen our security overall. Countries that adhere to the requirements will be agreeing to new procedures to screen travelers. In this way, we can both strengthen the national security of the United States and strengthen our partnerships with countries that meet DHS' proposed security enhancements through the ability to travel to the United States without a visa.

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

The Visa Waiver Program was established in 1986 to promote tourism and trade, and allow the Department of State to focus its attention on other travelers and consular matters. The VWP participant countries are: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The Departments of State and Homeland Security cooperate closely on the Visa Waiver Program. The DHS Office of International Enforcement has primary responsibility for overseeing the VWP. State's role is primarily consultative.

Since its inception, the VWP has fostered better relations with these participating countries. By facilitating travel, the VWP stimulates both international trade and travel. Let me expand a bit on the primary aspects of the program. Citizens of participating countries may visit the United States for business or pleasure for up to 90 days without obtaining a visa. For other purposes, such as for employment or studies, or longer stays, a visa is required. These 27 member countries all meet the statutory requirements for participation. Members must issue machine-readable passports, and must have a biometric passport program in place. They must report lost or stolen blank or issued passports in a timely fashion. All members must have a visa refusal rate of 3 percent or less, a low visa overstay rate and provide reciprocal, visa-free travel for U.S. citizens. Most importantly, DHS must positively determine that the country's participation in the program would not have a negative impact on U.S. security, immigration, and law enforcement interests.

For continued participation, DHS re-evaluates participating countries every two years, as required by Congress. Through this process, two countries, Argentina and Uruguay, now are no longer eligible to participate. Current members will have to fulfill any new requirements to continue their eligibility for membership in the program. I would also like to point out that while VWP travelers are not required to obtain visas, they are subject to screening prior to admission to the United States and are enrolled in DHS' US-VISIT program.

The VWP provides notable benefits to the United States. The latest data on the use of this program provided by the Department of Commerce shows for FY 2006:

1. Over 15 million VWP travelers visited the United States for tourism or business trips.
2. Of the top ten countries in expenditures in the United States, six were VWP participants, spending over \$50 billion.

Over 80 percent of the current VWP participants, and nearly all of the aspirant countries, are European. We have very close foreign policy, commercial and cultural ties to VWP members, and the VWP provides a foundation on which these ties can flourish. The United States and Europe form a united community of values, interests, and responsibilities. We also share commitments to human rights, rule of law, freedoms of religion and the press, and to market economics.

In commerce, the U.S.-European trade and investment relationship is the largest in the world. Transatlantic trade totals over \$500 billion annually, and the United States and the European Union are the largest investors in each other's markets. Of the \$5 trillion in foreign assets owned by U.S. companies, nearly 60 percent are in Europe. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of all foreign direct investment in the United States comes from EU investors. U.S.-owned affiliates in Europe employ six million workers; over four million Americans work for European companies.

"ROADMAP" PROCESS AND EXPANSION

In response to the strong interest of the new democracies of Central Europe and the Baltics to join the Visa Waiver Program, President Bush announced in February 2005 that the United States would develop bilateral strategies, or "Roadmaps," for those countries to help them understand and meet the requirements for admission to the VWP. Following this announcement, the Department, through our embassies, set up consular working groups with 13 governments to implement the "roadmap" process, in which we discuss the criteria that must be met to be considered for VWP membership. The "roadmap" countries have cooperated diligently with this process, but many countries believe that it offers them no realistic opportunities to join VWP in the near future.

The VWP provides proven and important benefits for the United States. The Administration and Members of Congress also recognize that it needs to be modernized to take into account the realities of a post-9/11 world. The proposed legislation would enhance the program's security, and allow for flexibility in the current visa

refusal rate standard. The prospect of VWP membership for “roadmap” countries gives us a strong platform for important dialogue on security and other bilateral matters, and will encourage compliance with current as well as contemplated VWP standards. These enhancements will lead to more secure U.S. borders, and the opening of dialogue will foster and strengthen our ties with these partners.

The new requirements under consideration to strengthen the security of visa-free travel would permit some of our allies to join the Visa Waiver Program, thereby strengthening U.S. bonds with those countries over the long term. At the same time, providing a realistic opportunity for these countries to join the Visa Waiver Program gives us a tool to enhance our cooperation with international allies in strengthening transportation security domestically and abroad. Improving security and membership opportunities for aspirant countries are thus mutually reinforcing reforms.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working with partner agencies and with you toward that goal. I would be happy to answer your questions.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. Sales.

STATEMENT OF MR. NATHAN A. SALES, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT, OFFICE OF POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. SALES. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much, Ranking Member Gallegly, and other members of the committee, it is a pleasure to be here with you today to discuss our shared efforts to modernize the Visa Waiver Program and protect the American people from those who seek to do harm to us.

I would be happy to answer any questions about any of the topics that I raise in my written statement, but for right now I would like to focus on just a few issues.

First, I would like to talk about the problems that have spurred the administration’s call for VWP modernization. Next, I would like to discuss the importance of one particular set of reforms, those that relate to information sharing. Then finally, I would like to talk about the need for flexibility on the visa refusal rate requirement currently in the statute.

So why do we need to change the VWP at all? Well, the program has served America and her allies well for more than two decades. It helps strengthen our economic and cultural ties with close partners throughout the world. It also makes it easier for Americans to travel when they venture abroad. But in many ways the current Visa Waiver Program is a relic of the pre-9/11 world.

One of the program’s shortcomings is that its primary focus is on the threat of illegal economic migration to the United States from less developed countries throughout the world. Let me be plain. DHS takes that threat seriously, and we are continuing to act vigorously against it, but in the wake of 9/11, our primary mission must always be protecting the lives of innocent Americans. We need a VWP that will better enable us to protect our citizens from those who seek to do us harm.

The program’s second shortcoming is that it screens for security threats on a country-by-country basis rather than a traveler-by-traveler basis. It assumes that all citizens from VWP nations represent a lesser threat to the security of the United States, and it also assumes that people from non-VWP countries pose a greater security threat to this country.

Those assumptions are not valid. The threat of global terrorism is not confined to particular corners of the globe. What we need is

a VWP that can screen for these threats at a finer level of granularity. Here is what we think the new security rules should look like.

The administration has put forward seven new security proposals. Some of the most vital proposals relate to information sharing. This is a lesson that we all learned from the 9/11 Commission. We need to be able to connect the dots. Right now DHS can't connect the dots as effectively as we would like because we lack sufficient information about passengers who are coming to the United States.

Think about what is lost when a country moves from the visa category to visa-free category. Travelers from visa countries have to fill out detailed visa applications. They have to sit for consular interviews. They also have to give us their fingerprints.

VWP travelers don't have to do any of those things before they come to this country. As a result, we don't know a whole lot about them until they show up at Dulles or JFK with their passport in hand. We need new sources of data to close that information gap. If you invite a guest into your house, you want to make sure they are going to play by your rules first. That is why DHS wants our international partners to share information with us about whether people coming to this country represent threats to this country.

We expect the VWP countries will cooperate fully in implementing the new security measures. After all, it is in their interest to do so. Tougher security doesn't just save American lives, it also protects German and French and Japanese citizens too.

That brings us to another crucial fact that I would like to highlight. The new security measures will be applied to new VWP members first, but in several years we intend to extend them to current VWP countries as well. We have no interest in running a two-tiered VWP. The same security standards should apply to all member countries regardless of when they were admitted into the program.

The last thing I will say is this. I have talked a bit about the need for tougher security rules, and my colleague has mentioned the administration's desire for flexibility on the 3 percent visa refusal rate requirement. Those two goals are not mutually exclusive. Rather, security and flexibility walk hand in hand. Flexibility helps us achieve security. The more countries that are eligible for inclusion or for consideration of inclusion in the VWP the more competition there will be to get in. That competition, in turn, will spur incentives that will lead countries to agree to security arrangements that are desirable to the United States. That is why the administration would prefer for Congress to give us complete flexibility under the visa refusal rate requirement rather than simply raise it from 3 percent to a marginally higher level.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling today's hearing. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sales follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. NATHAN A. SALES, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT, OFFICE OF POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Chairman Wexler, Ranking Member Gallegly, and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today. I'd like to discuss

the ongoing efforts of the Administration and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to ensure that the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) addresses vital national security concerns, while also providing opportunities to expand participation to key U.S. allies.

The VWP has served the United States and her allies well for nearly two decades. Since 1988, the program has allowed the nationals of designated countries to travel to the United States, visa-free, for business or pleasure for up to 90 days. The VWP was designed to facilitate low-risk travel to the U.S., eliminate barriers to travel for U.S. citizens, encourage economic and cultural exchange, and allow the Department of State to focus its visa screening activities on high-risk areas.

Currently, 27 countries participate in the VWP, and approximately 15 million people enter the United States under the VWP annually. By law, a nation cannot be designated for membership in the program unless it complies with a number of statutory requirements. Chief among these is the requirement that the country's participation not undermine the United States' national security, law enforcement, and immigration interests. Another requirement is that VWP aspirants must achieve a nonimmigrant visa refusal rate that is less than three percent.

In addition, countries that succeed in joining the VWP are evaluated biennially to make certain that their continued designation does not compromise our nation's security, law enforcement, and immigration interests. A biennial review may include, among other things, an examination of a country's counterterrorism capabilities and partnerships with the United States, citizenship and naturalization laws, passport production and issuance controls, efforts to combat organized criminal activities, general law enforcement cooperation with the United States, extradition procedures and agreements with the United States, immigration laws and practices, and border control mechanisms.

While the VWP has served us well, in several ways the program is a relic of the pre-9/11 era. The VWP's first shortcoming is that its principal focus is on the threat of economic migration, not international terrorism. DHS remains committed to ensuring that foreign nationals do not flout our immigration laws by coming here to work illegally. But after 9/11, our first priority must be to exclude from our country those who would exploit our hospitality to do us harm. The second shortcoming is that the current VWP evaluates security threats on a country-by-country basis, not a traveler-by-traveler basis. The program simultaneously assumes that all nationals of participating countries pose a lesser security threat to the United States, and that all nationals of non-members pose a greater threat. Neither assumption is tenable. We need to act now to close these security loopholes. Equally important is extending the opportunity for VWP membership to key U.S. allies that are unlikely to be able to meet some of the current statutory criteria, such as attaining a three percent non-immigrant visa refusal rate.

To enhance the security of the VWP, the Administration has proposed a suite of seven new security measures. Four of the measures would be mandatory prerequisites for participation in the program: (1) an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system, which would require VWP travelers to register online in advance of travel; (2) more robust data sharing efforts; (3) requirements for timely reporting of blank as well as issued lost and stolen passports (LASP); and (4) guarantees to accept the repatriation of nationals ordered removed from the United States. Three additional measures would not be mandatory, but DHS would take them into consideration as "confidence enhancers" when deciding which aspirants should be admitted to the program: (5) airport security standards; (6) air marshals programs; and (7) common standards for national travel documents.

Let me spend a few moments discussing each of these proposed security measures.

First, unlike foreign nationals who travel on visas, VWP travelers are not required to submit to consular interviews at U.S. Missions abroad before they come to the United States. Nor are they required to complete detailed visa applications, or provide biometrics in advance of travel. As a result, less advance information on these travelers is available to U.S. law authorities. To close this information gap, we have proposed the creation of an ETA system, similar to a system currently used by the Government of Australia. We expect that the U.S. ETA system would require all VWP travelers, in advance of travel, to submit an electronic application through a secure website, which would route the data to DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for processing. If a traveler is not approved by the system, he or she will be directed to contact a U.S. Mission abroad for visa screening and visa issuance. The ETA would only assess a VWP citizen's eligibility to travel to the United States; it would not be a determination of admissibility. Funds used to develop, operate, and maintain the system would be recouped by establishing a fee-for-service payment structure. CBP is spearheading a DHS-wide working group, which is devel-

opening a project plan for the ETA system. State Department representatives have also participated in this working group.

Second, the United States should be made aware of persons intending to travel to this country who may present security risks. Thus, VWP members must enter into agreements to share information with U.S. national security, law enforcement, and immigration authorities. Member countries could do so by checking the names of U.S.-bound nationals against their relevant terrorism and law enforcement databases and sharing pertinent information with U.S. authorities on a real-time basis. Or they could allow U.S. authorities to access information in those databases to improve U.S. terrorism screening. In addition, we will be asking member countries not to interfere with the free flow of certain information held by commercial entities, such as passenger name records (PNR).

Third, passports issued by VWP countries are attractive targets for terrorists, criminals, or others who seek ready access to the United States. Accordingly, it is vital to U.S. interests that information on lost or stolen VWP passports is reported to the United States in a timely manner. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of passport reporting, we propose that member countries report promptly *all* lost and stolen passports—not just blank, but also issued—to the United States. Reporting should occur as soon as possible after the government learns a passport has gone missing, ideally within a matter of days. Member countries also should designate points of contact to expeditiously answer questions about passport validity so that encounters with reported lost and stolen passports can be rapidly resolved at U.S. ports of entry.

DHS supports the use of Interpol's stolen lost travel document (SLTD) database as a mechanism for LASP data collection. We would agree to accept LASP reporting through Interpol provided that the quality and frequency of reporting by VWP countries meet U.S. needs, and that the SLTD proves effective for border enforcement at U.S. ports of entry. DHS is working to ensure the automated screening of all inbound air travelers' advanced passenger information system (APIS) data against Interpol's SLTD database. DHS intends for this capability to be deployed incrementally to all U.S. airports beginning in October 2007. Establishing this capability will add a significant new screening mechanism for identifying individuals traveling to or from the United States on *male fide* travel documents.

Fourth, removal of aliens from the United States can be difficult, as it normally is predicated on the country of origin accepting its citizens for repatriation. Because of the ease with which VWP nationals can travel to the United States, we propose that VWP members, as a requirement for program participation, accept repatriation of their nationals who are ordered removed from this country. Removal should take place no later than three weeks after a final order of removal has been issued. Member countries should cooperate with the United States to promptly verify the identity and citizenship status of their nationals who are the subject of removal proceedings.

In addition to these four mandatory requirements for VWP membership, DHS would consider a number of discretionary security factors when deciding which countries to admit into, or retain in, the VWP. One is that VWP members and aspirants meet certain heightened standards of airport security. These standards may include ensuring that airport employees undergo background checks, issuing tamper-resistant credentials to airport employees, limiting access to the airport's secure areas to persons who have undergone background checks and have the appropriate credentials, screening baggage according to DHS Transportation Security Administration standards, and permitting CBP's Immigration Advisory Program (IAP) to operate at certain airports.

A second factor would be cooperation in the operation of effective air marshals programs. In particular, U.S. federal air marshals (FAMs) should be permitted to operate on foreign-flagged carriers that fly to, from, or over the United States. Also, FAMs must be permitted to carry weapons onboard all international flights, just as they do on domestic flights within the United States. Alternatively, a country may wish to develop and deploy its own air marshal program, with assistance from the United States.

Another discretionary security factor would be enhanced security features in VWP countries' travel documents, including an array of production and issuance control standards. Best practices could include a notation on all travel documents issued to replace lost or stolen passports, as well as a unique non-recurring identification number that is affixed when the document is manufactured (not when it is personalized). In addition, emergency and temporary passports should be made to document security standards that are as stringent as those used for ordinary passports, and passports should be issued by a central authority or through a small number of re-

gional or local authorities that are subject to stringent audit and accountability mechanisms.

All seven of the new security measures, mandatory and discretionary alike, would apply to both current and future VWP members. Countries seeking admission to the program for the first time would need to implement these measures before they could join. As for current members, the new security measures would be phased in on a rolling basis over approximately two years, in conjunction with the statutorily mandated biennial security reviews.

Most of this testimony has focused on the need to add heightened security requirements to the Visa Waiver Program. But the Administration's other principal policy objective—bringing flexibility to the VWP—deserves mention, too. The twin goals of security and flexibility are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary. Expanding the circle of countries that could be considered for membership in the program will create incentives for aspirants and members alike to enter into arrangements that are desirable from a security standpoint. That is why the Administration favors VWP legislation that would offer complete flexibility on the visa refusal rate requirement, not simply increase it from three percent to some marginally higher rate. Under the Administration's proposal, an aspirant's visa refusal rate would still be an important factor in deciding whether to admit that country to the program. But a rate below three percent would no longer be an absolute, inflexible prerequisite for membership.

* * *

DHS is committed to further strengthening the VWP's security features and expanding the program's membership. DHS is also pleased with the collaborative relationship the Administration and Congress have enjoyed in working together to achieve our shared goals of strengthening the program's overall security and creating a path to membership for valuable U.S. allies. Ensuring that secure, legitimate visa-free travel to the United States is available to our allies is in everyone's interest. We must all work together to maintain a VWP that simultaneously promotes unhindered travel, while not compromising our country's national security, law enforcement, or immigration interests.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you might have at this time.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much. I want to thank the ambassadors who are in attendance today, the Ambassador of Slovakia, the Ambassador of Lithuania, and the Czech Republic, as well as the Deputy Chiefs of Mission of Hungary and Romania. Thank you very much for showing interest.

If I could just start the questioning in a brief fashion and ask for full responses. One, in the context of Greece, it is my understanding that Greece would, in effect, meet the current qualifications for entering the program even without any change in law. So what has slowed the process in terms of Greece? And why hasn't Greece been invited to participate in the Visa Waiver Program based on its current qualifications?

Two, in terms of the proposals before Congress, given the basis of your testimony today and the objectives of flexibility and added security measures, there are, I think, at least three proposals in the House: My own, Congressman Manuel, Chairman Thompson, as well as the Senate has passed its provisions as a part of the 9-11 Commission. I guess in my mind has one onerous position in terms of creating the requirement of the exit program and attaching that to the availability of the Visa Waiver Program.

There are some Members of Congress who take an entirely different approach, which is to eliminate the Visa Waiver Program altogether.

So my question would be, understanding the administration's substantive position, where does it come down on these specific bills, please?

Mr. SALES. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman.

As to Greece, we at DHS and our State Department counterparts are working very closely with Greece to identify a way forward for that country to be considered for inclusion into the program.

It is true that Greece has met a number of the current statutory requirements for inclusion in the program. They issue e-Visas, as mandated by Congress. Their visa refusal rate is at or below 3 percent, which is the statutory cutoff mandated by Congress.

There are several other factors in addition to those statutory criteria that the administration considers when designating new program countries. One of those criteria is whether participation would compromise the national security, law enforcement, and immigration interests of the United States. That is language taken directly from the Visa Waiver Program statute, and we are working closely with the Government of Greece and our counterparts at State to see how well roadmap countries measure up to that statutory standard.

Mr. WEXLER. Is there a time frame in which Greece might expect an ultimate resolution?

Mr. SALES. I don't know that I can offer a firm prediction as to when the process will be completed other than to say that it is a priority for our departments. It is a priority for our respective secretaries, and we are giving it our fullest attention right now.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay. Given that it is an extraordinary disincentive for those countries who are making a pretty significant effort to try to meet the standards to watch Greece, which has already met the standards, be put on hold for quite a bit. It doesn't provide a great example for those countries that are just a little bit behind Greece. I would highly encourage you to move as quickly as possible. Mr. Edson, as to the broader issues of the administration's policy.

Mr. EDSON. Broadly speaking, the administration would like as much flexibility as possible in addressing that refusal rate criteria consistent with the security concerns that are obviously paramount. I think we are prepared to work cooperatively with the Congress looking at these different proposals.

Mr. WEXLER. Do the provisions in the Senate bill require attaching the exit program to the Visa Waiver Program availability? Does that, in effect, undo the objective that we are trying to seek in terms of adding countries to the Visa Waiver Program?

Mr. EDSON. Since it is actually the exit program, could I defer to my colleague from DHS?

Mr. WEXLER. Sure.

Mr. SALES. I would be happy to sit in the hot seat. The administration, Mr. Chairman, as you know, has put forward a proposal. That proposal did not contain an exit requirement, and without—

Mr. WEXLER. It is because we don't have an exit program today, correct?

Mr. SALES. We are working to build a more effective one.

Mr. WEXLER. Right.

Mr. SALES. We do have an exit program that is under development. It has been deployed as a pilot program at certain airports.

We have learned a number of lessons from that deployment, and are re-tooling our exit program to account for the lessons that we have learned.

I think it is safe to say that there is not a whole lot of daylight between the administration's proposal and the various proposals that are circulating on the Hill right now. Obviously, the administration would prefer to see Congress enact legislation that is as close to possible as the one that we have put forward as our preferred approach. But there isn't a whole lot of daylight between us here, and I think we look forward to working with this committee and other Members of Congress to achieve or mutually sought—

Mr. WEXLER. I would like to give Mr. Gallegly an opportunity before we must leave for votes, and then I would ask—how many votes are there?

Two, so it should be relatively short. If the witnesses wouldn't mind staying, we will come back after the votes.

Mr. Gallegly.

Mr. GALLEGLY. I will try to be brief, Mr. Chairman. I know that we are about to hear the second set of bills.

Mr. Edson, can you estimate the amount of new staff and resources that would be necessary to process visas if the EU countries that are part of the Visa Waiver Program could no longer participate in the program?

Mr. EDSON. Yes. Not here, but yes.

We are working closely with GAO now on an ongoing study on exactly this question. We could submit some detailed comments for the record with numbers in the response. But in general, what we have to be looking at, because of the requirement for personal interview for almost all visa applicants and for the biometric enrollment, we would be looking at ramping up facilities more than equivalent, equivalent to—potentially as much as twice as much of our current non-immigrant visa workload around the world, but doing it in 27 of the countries in the world with the most expensive real estate and labor costs.

So we are working with GAO to cost those models out.

Mr. GALLEGLY. So you don't have a number or an approximate, a range, or number of personnel?

Mr. EDSON. No. Too much would depend—again, we are working on something that just assumes we have the current visa process replicated throughout Europe and Japan and Singapore, but within that model, because the numbers are so large, small changes would potentially have a large impact on the final dollar.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Well, it is a little premature for us to really understand what those numbers are at this point.

Mr. EDSON. We will have numbers from the GAO report. I believe they are trying to wrap up that study by the end of the summer.

[Additional information follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MR. STEPHEN A. "TONY" EDSON TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE ELTON GALLEGLY

The Department of State is currently analyzing these issues in conjunction with engagements from the GAO. Complete information will be available at the completion of the engagements.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Mr. Sales, what steps are being taken to address the issues that have been raised concerning the roadmaps given to countries to help them meet the requirements of the Visa Waiver Program?

Mr. SALES. Thank you for the question, sir.

We meet regularly with representatives of the roadmap countries as well as current VWP members to educate them about the United States' position on the need for new security requirements.

I think one of the things that is particularly helpful to the roadmap countries is the series of technical visits that we have hosted for representatives of those countries. These are full-day conferences in which representatives of, most recently, Hungary, Greece, Poland, South Korea, and other countries, come to the United States, sit down with technical experts from the Department of Homeland Security who share with these roadmap representatives what specifically we would like to have done from a security standpoint. So what are the standards that we insist on for lost and stolen passports? What are the standards we would like to see for document security?

We have also begun to educate our international partners about how exactly we would implement the new security requirements, the seven security measures that we have proposed should Congress act to enact VWP modernization.

I would characterize our relationships with the roadmap countries as very close and productive.

Mr. GALLEGLY. Thank you, Mr. Sales.

I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Delahunt, I am happy to go to you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Sure. What would be your estimate in terms of time for the full implementation of an exit program?

Mr. SALES. Let me say that the Department of Homeland Security and the administration fully support an exit solution. We need to know who is coming into our country; we need to know who is leaving our country. That is currently the law, and DHS fully supports the policy that underlies that law.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I understand you support the policy.

Mr. SALES. Yes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. My question is: Can we accelerate the implementation of the technology or any technologies that are required? Because I think that would go a long way in addressing the concerns that colleagues have voiced, such as Mr. Gallegly.

Mr. SALES. Yes, Congressman. We are trying to do that right now. We are trying to accelerate deployment of exit.

The way we envision exit working, and let us distinguish for a moment between biographic exit and biometric exit. The way we envision exit working is when a traveler enters the United States, the Customs and Border Protection official at the booth at JFK swipes the person's passport and collects what is known as APIS data, Advanced Passenger Information System data: Name, passport number, country of citizenship.

Upon departure, we envision that the airlines, when they check passengers in, will also swipe the passport and collect APIS data or manually key the information into their computer.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is fine. Can you give me any kind of an estimate of time?

Mr. SALES. That is the system as it currently exists. There are problems with the reliability of the data and the matching of data, and so I think this may be more responsive to your question, sir.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Give that a shot.

Mr. SALES. Our hope is that we can achieve reliable data matching within 6 months to a year.

Mr. DELAHUNT. That is good news. I think that you will find that the chairman, myself and others would be very supportive of advocating for the necessary funding for full implementation because I really honestly believe that those who have expressed concerns, many of those concerns would be assuaged by the full implementation of an exit program.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WEXLER. An excellent point.

If we could just be in recess for the two votes and we will come back. Thank you so much.

[Recess.]

Mr. WEXLER. I would like to call the Europe Subcommittee back into order. Thank you very much for your attendance.

If I could start with both of the witnesses again, we had talked earlier about Greece in terms of its 1.8 percent non-immigrant visa refusal rate. It is considerably lower than the 3 percent threshold for Greece.

I am looking at the chart for 2005, they were 2.5 percent, in 2006 2.2 percent, and I guess the estimate or data through March 31, 2007, Greece is at 1.8 percent. So they have a significant pattern here of extraordinarily low refusal rates.

I would like to ask about Israel, who I see in 2007, for the first 3 months is at 2.9 percent. For those of us who have been through Ben Gurion Airport, both the new one and the old one, even the concept that we have something over the Israelis in terms of security would be somewhat mind-boggling. However, Israel is at 2.9 percent for 2007.

Can you share with me what discussions or what plans there are with respect to Israel in terms of their participation in the Visa Waiver Program?

Mr. EDSON. At this point we have spoken fairly frequently with the Government of Israel mostly out at our Embassy in Israel explaining the requirements for the program and providing background. I don't believe that we are much further than that; explaining things like the biometric passport requirement, working together on law enforcement, and counterterrorism issues.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay.

Mr. SALES. Mr. Chairman, if I could add to that.

The roadmap process is largely one of self-selection. Countries sort of self-nominate for potential inclusion into the Visa Waiver Program. And to my knowledge, while we have had conversations with the Government of Israel, that self-selection has not taken place at this point.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay. With respect to Cyprus, for the first 3 months of 2007, they are 2.2 percent. In all of 2006 they were 2.2

percent, in 2005 they were at 1.6 percent. Where are we with respect to Cyprus?

Mr. SALES. Sir, I think we are at the same point with Cyprus that we are with a number of other roadmap countries such as Greece and Hungary and the Czech Republic and others that have put themselves forward.

We continue to have conversations with these countries, including Cyprus, that I would characterize as robust and frank, explaining requirements for passports, explaining requirements for the new security measures should Congress enact new legislation.

Mr. WEXLER. Can I ask what effect, as Mr. Gallegly's last question, could I ask the opposite of that question? If I remember the essence of his question, it was if we were not to have the Visa Waiver Program, how many additional employees would be required? I think that is what he asked.

So the opposite question is, if we were to adopt a Visa Waiver Program that was more inclusive in the context of the European countries that we have mentioned, in the context of Israel and Cyprus, South Korea, and so forth, is there an estimate of how many resources we would have that could then be put toward more significant or other threats, or even make better use of them?

Mr. EDSON. Certainly. Likewise, I could respond for the record with specific numbers.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM MR. STEPHEN A. "TONY" EDSON TO QUESTION
ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE ROBERT WEXLER

The Department of State is currently analyzing these issues in conjunction with engagements from the GAO. Complete information will be available at the completion of the engagements.

Mr. EDSON. We are doing modeling partly dependent on what might eventually come out of Congress in terms of enhanced security requirements. Something like the electronic travel authorization, for example, if individuals didn't pass through that hurdle, and were not granted an electronic travel authorization, they would still be applicants for visas at our facilities. So how that is structured will have some bearing on how many staff positions we could move.

We fully expect though that we would be moving staff positions, significant numbers of American positions from new visa waiver member countries to other places around the world where visa demand is increasing, often at a double-digit rate, like China and India.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you very much.

I want to just further encourage you with respect to Israel and Cyprus. I understand it is a self-nominating process, but the facts would seem to bear that those two countries deserve fairly quick treatment if it is appropriate.

With that, I will move to Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. English, Mr. Bilirakis was here earlier. If you don't mind, may we go to Mr. Bilirakis? Mr. Bilirakis, among many interests, has great interest in issues concerning the Hellenic Caucus. I think before you got here I asked specifically about Greece, and I now asked about Cyprus, but please follow it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to serve on this committee. I appreciate it very much.

Yes. Well, with regard to the Greek, I actually listened to your response to a certain extent. Can you elaborate a little bit on the waiver program?

Representative Maloney and I co-chair the Hellenic Caucus. She is going to file a bill which I have originally co-sponsored, I believe, this afternoon in regards to entering Greece into the program. If you can elaborate on that, I would appreciate it very much.

Mr. SALES. Thank you, Congressman.

Greece is a very close ally of the United States. We share a number of cultural, political, and economic ties. The United States didn't invent democracy. Greece did. So we have been working very closely with our friends in Athens to explain to them the requirements for admission into the program.

As the chairman has pointed out, Greece has satisfied several of those statutory criteria. Greece's refusal rate is low, and has been decreasing over the years. They are currently—2006, the numbers for Greece were 2.2 percent, I believe, and Greece looks to be on track to achieve even lower numbers this year.

Another statutory criterion that Greece has satisfied for inclusion into the Visa Waiver Program is the e-Passport requirement, which Congress added to the statute several years ago. Greece is now issuing passports with the "e" chip embedded in the passports.

There are other statutory criteria that we look forward to continuing to work with Greece to explain how those can be satisfied. Chief among them is the statutory mandate that a country's participation in the program satisfies the national security, law enforcement and immigration interests of the United States.

When examining whether a country meets that statutory standard, we look at a number of different factors: Border security factors, airport security standards. Also, we have been explaining to representatives of the Greek Government, as well as representatives of governments of other roadmap countries, what the new security measures would mean for them should Congress enact legislation to modernize the Visa Waiver Program.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Among the candidates, where would you rank Greece as far as performance?

Mr. SALES. Greece is, as I said, they have one of the lower visa refusal rates right now. They are toward the low end of that. I prefer not to get into horse trading. There are different countries that have different strengths, and there are different countries that have been involved in this process for longer or less time.

But our message has been to all the roadmap countries that we need a uniform set of rules and standards so these countries don't have to guess where they stand on the list. They don't have to say, well, am I number one in the class rank, or am I number five?

Rather, we are pushing for new legislation with these new security requirements so that there is complete transparency, and so all the roadmap countries know what would be expected of them before they could be admitted into the program.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate it. I am going to keep in touch with you on that.

Mr. SALES. Thank you, sir.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Another question is: What kind of information sharing takes place between the DHS and countries in the Visa Waiver Program?

Mr. SALES. Our information sharing capabilities are robust, but they could stand some improvement. We have very strong relationships, information sharing relationships with certain countries around the world. There are other countries where the information sharing relationships could stand some improvement, frankly.

Our hope is that as we move forward with Visa Waiver Program reform, that all the countries who are seeking admission to the program will come to realize the value of information sharing.

Information sharing and security measures don't just benefit the United States. They also benefit other countries as well, and we have said in the past in connection with this effort that we do not intend to ask for any new security measures of other countries that we in the United States are not willing to adopt ourselves.

So any request for information that we would make of another country, we would be willing to reciprocate and provide that sort of information in response to a request from that country.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Would you consider admitting a country on a probationary basis? Is there any history there of a probationary basis?

Mr. SALES. Mr. Congressmen, I don't believe that the current statute authorizes probationary membership. I believe the statute as currently written identifies a number of statutory criteria that have to be fulfilled before a country could be considered for admission into that program.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. As far as enhancing, would you recommend any other enhancing as far as requirements? Maybe both of you can comment on that.

Mr. SALES. Sure. We have had a number of conversations about what sorts of security measures would most effectively protect the lives of innocent Americans. We talked a bit about information sharing earlier today. The administration has put forward a suite of seven. Four of those measures we are proposing be made mandatory, absolute preconditions for membership in the program. The three other ones we are proposing not to be mandatory but rather would be discretionary "confidence enhancers" that we would look to when deciding whether to designate a country or which ones should be designated first.

The four mandatory security measures that we have put forward are: First, the electronic travel authorization. This would allow citizens of other countries who want to come to the United States to go on line and, after making a reservation with their airline, make a reservation with the United States. We use that information to screen for potential terrorist threats.

We talked a bit about information sharing. That is the second one.

The third mandatory requirement that we have put forward is repatriation. Countries whose citizens have an easier time coming to the United States, that implies a reciprocal obligation to take those citizens back when they are determined by a court to be no longer entitled to stay in the United States. So we would ask countries to make assurances that they will receive their citizens via repatriation.

And then the fourth one is lost and stolen passport information. We currently get information about passports that are lost and stolen if those passports are blank, but we would also like some information about personalized passports because passports of Visa Waiver Program countries are sort of an express lane into the United States. They therefore command a pretty high value on the black market and among those who have nefarious designs on our country.

Very, very quickly because I don't want to take up all of your time, the last three measures, the discretionary measures are effective air marshal services, airport security standards, and then common standards for travel documents.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

Again with regard to Greece, as far as a time line, do you anticipate a decision within this year?

Mr. SALES. Our hope is that these processes can be wound down expeditiously. We are currently in talks—we meaning the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State—with our counterparts in Greece and at the Greek Embassy here. It is hard to predict in advance how long the roadmap process will take for a particular country, but we are doing everything in our power to make as clear as possible our hopes for the security measures that Greece and other roadmap countries would need to undertake before inclusion in the program.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, and one last question: I understand that the Department of State has endorsed Greece's admission into the Visa Waiver Program, is that correct?

Mr. EDSON. Yes and no. The Department of States believes that Greece has met the objective criteria, those very specifically and objectively stated criteria in the legislation. We endorse Greece as a potential member in the VWP in terms of its cooperative relationship with the United States as a very close ally.

We have therefore recommended to DHS that we take this further step of looking at those criteria that my colleague mentioned about impact on national security and law enforcement, and taking that next step to look at those more subjective and more complex criteria.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WEXLER. You are very welcome, Mr. Bilirakis.

If I could follow up, when Mr. Gallegly and Mr. Delahunt had their little discussion before we broke for the votes, I did not comment because I wanted to get to you both.

To me the issue is not the quality of life in America and how we as Americans view our quality of life. We have our own domestic debates and our own domestic elections to determine what course we will take. I think most of us would agree we are the most privileged citizens on earth, and there isn't a day that goes by that certainly I don't express internally to myself my own gratitude for being born in America and having the privilege of living here. To me that is not the issue involved here.

The issue here is America's standing in the world, and how that relative negative standing affects our ability as a nation to pursue our objectives internationally. To deny that negative perceptions

across the world negatively impact America's ability to pursue our own objectives to me, would just simply defy logic.

So we talk about impact on national security, I think it is a fair conclusion to suggest that while certainly we should not make our international policy based on polling data across the world. However, year in and year out of declining perceptions regarding America throughout the world, must have an incredible negative impact on American national security. The result is it becomes more and more difficult for our administration to persuade allies and the international public to pursue the objectives that America seeks which are in our national interest. That is whether we are talking about asking countries to join with us in opposition to the Iranian nuclear program, or talking about global warming, the Balkans, Turkey's entry into the European Union, or a thousand different issues. I don't want to exaggerate the importance of the Visa Waiver Program, but from what I hear from ambassadors to this country, from Europe and from those countries affected, in their view, there would be no single act that the United States could implement that would more significantly improve America's standing amongst the publics of Europe than to adopt a Visa Waiver Program. As a result, it would seem then that governments following the perception of their won publics, which would be more favorable to America, would be in a better position to cooperate with America in a whole host of subjects.

So while this subcommittee meeting so far as focused on the technical aspects of the Visa Waiver Program, it would seem to me that in some respects the more global aspects of the program are actually what should be the focus and the potential benefit.

In that respect, I find it curious that when we negotiate with the European Union on issues like the Open Skies Agreement, and on issues like data sharing; my understanding is we negotiate with the European Union as a whole. We don't go and pick out Greece, the Czech Republic and Poland. We negotiate with the entire European Union, and I would suggest that is the proper way to go.

In the context of the Visa Waiver Program, even though it is the desired administrative policy, if I understand it correctly, for a uniform set of requirements, we apply them individually to countries, and don't negotiate as a whole. We then see countries like Greece, who have performed exceedingly well, not be moved up.

So I am thoroughly confused why we bother to negotiate with the European Union as a whole on Open Skies and data sharing, but don't do the same for the Visa Waiver Program.

Wouldn't that be in our self-interest to negotiate with the European Union as a whole, if in fact we want a uniform set of requirements?

Mr. EDSON. This actually has been one of the things about the roadmap process that has been most challenging. We have in Europe a multilateral framework for dealing with what for us, for legal reasons, remains a bilateral program, a nationality-based program.

We have actually over the course of the past 4 years expanded our relationship with the European Union considerably in discussing both individual things that the European Union has competency in, jurisdiction over, like information sharing in many

cases, and then sort of collaterally issues related to the Visa Waiver Program where we still have to have bilateral discussions, but we recognize that on their side, for example, when a country joins Schengen, then the competent authority then becomes the Schengen bureaucracy in Europe rather than the individual country.

So we are actually approaching it both ways. It is a bilateral negotiation, a bilateral discussion in full recognition that we are dealing with multilateral structures on their side. It is a little awkward sometimes, but it has been a pretty constructive relationship overall.

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Sales, anything?

Mr. SALES. I will leave the answer to the diplomat.

Mr. WEXLER. Okay. If I could follow, often we focus on the questions, rightfully so, of expanding the Visa Waiver Program and what the impact would be. Could you share with the subcommittee your estimation of what the impact would be of further delaying the implementation of expansion of the Visa Waiver Program? Also equally important, what would be the impact as some Members of Congress have called for in eliminating the Visa Waiver Program altogether?

Mr. SALES. Mr. Chairman, let me take one small sliver of that, and focus on what would be the security consequences of delaying the Visa Waiver Program modernization.

Mr. WEXLER. Please.

Mr. SALES. I think the consequences for security would be bad. The United States is at war.

Mr. WEXLER. Could you just say that again? I realize Mr. Gallegly is not here; but so everybody understands, it is your testimony that delaying the implementation of the Visa Waiver Program, the Department of Homeland Security testifies that it would be adverse to our national interest. Is that correct?

Mr. SALES. Yes, sir.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you.

Mr. SALES. The reason why it would be harmful to the national security is because we, the administration, have put forward a balanced package of reform that seeks to accomplish two objectives. The first is to enhance our diplomatic relations with close partners who are seeking membership in the program. The second is to enhance security of the United States.

The longer it takes us to begin to implement reform the longer it will be before we can insist on the new security measures coming on line.

As I adverted to, the United States remains at war with a global enemy that is capable of hitting us and hitting us hard. And I think it would behoove the administration and Congress to move expeditiously to bring these new security measures on line as quickly as possible.

Mr. WEXLER. Probably what we need to do is have a new title for the bill. Maybe it shouldn't be the Visa Waiver Program Bill but rather the Increased National Security Bill, or the Anti-Terrorism Bill, or the Further Anti-Terrorism Bill. Perhaps it would move further.

Mr. Bilirakis, do you wish to go?

Mr. BILIRAKIS. No, I think I am okay. Thank you. However, I have an opening statement. I would like to admit that into the record if that is okay.

Mr. WEXLER. Absolutely.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you.

Mr. WEXLER. Absolutely.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bilirakis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GUS BILIRAKIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to speak about a very critical issue to our national security and foreign policy.

Although I have serious concerns about any program that may open our nation up to additional threats, I do believe that the policy of the United States should *NOT BE* to penalize our friends and neighbors; especially those who have taken great strides to improve security and immigration procedures within their own countries. Many have made these reforms partially with the prospect of qualifying for America's Visa Waiver Program.

Terrorists seek to change our way of life and stop the growth and prosperity of the global community by driving a wedge of fear and suspicion between us all. I know this is a fear that arises when we consider expanding the Visa Waiver Program. Taking away this initial step by which foreign visitors are screened for admissibility to the United States, stirs fear that we may be putting the security of our nation's homeland at risk.

The benefits of expanding the Visa Waiver Program, however, should outweigh these certainly legitimate, but misdirected concerns. Expansion of the program would improve international commerce and business travel, and ease the current workload burdens facing many of our consular offices abroad. A strong and secure Visa Waiver Program would allow America's consular professionals to focus on nations who have not yet taken the necessary steps to ensure that their visitors do not pose a threat to the United States' national security.

It is true that terrorist suspects and criminals have entered our country through legitimate visas and illegal means before. This ongoing challenge, which I have examined extensively as a member of the Homeland Security Committee's Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee, is very complex and requires more than just spending our time finding ways to secure our borders. We must also seek ways to improve cooperation with our allies, neighbors and friends. It is through this enhanced dialogue and cooperation that will we adequately address many of the international threats that our homeland faces.

The Visa Waiver Program has encouraged our friends to institute biometric passports for their citizens, develop passports with data-chips (or e-passports) and programs for tamper-proof, scan-able visa documents that incorporate biometric technology usable at their country's port of entry.

It is important to note that countries are subject to the Department of Homeland Security regulations of the US-VISIT program. Additionally, any current or future country participating in the Visa Waiver Program may have their privileges revoked at any time should conditions in that country or region threaten the safety or welfare of the American people.

I am especially sensitive to the potential security risks the Visa Waiver Program might pose to our nation. That is why I fully support continued efforts to identify such risks and work with applicant countries on what should be an ever-evolving roadmap to accession.

Many of the United States' most staunch allies have come very close to meeting the requirements of participation in the Visa Waiver Program. However, they remain shut-out. Greece, South Korea, Israel and Poland are just a few of those allies who remain locked out of a privilege that many of their neighbors currently enjoy. These fortunate participants, therefore, have an edge when it comes to commerce, trade and developing a deeper, strategic relationship with the United States.

Considering the sacrifices and commitment countries like Greece, Poland, Israel and South Korea have demonstrated to the benefit of American interests, it is imperative that we factor this into any consideration of expanding the Visa Waiver Program. Many of these countries have provided us critical support in the Global War on Terror and operate very closely with us on several security fronts whether it is military, economic or political.

This is why I would like to know about the issues preventing the United States from resolving any outstanding issues it may have with those countries that meet the Visa Waiver Program accession criteria. For instance, Greece, who has remained a steadfast ally of the United States, has been up for consideration since the late 1990's. In recent years, Greece has proven to be one of the most economically sound members of the European Union. It has the highest economic growth rate of any other European nation and has invested billions of dollars in its neighbors to help bolster their economies which have, in turn, provided greater stability in the Balkans and throughout the southern Mediterranean corridor.

Among all candidate countries for entry into the Visa Waiver Program, Greece constitutes a separate and unique case in that it meets all technical requirements for inclusion in the program, including the required 3 percent rate for refusals of U.S. non-immigrant visitor visa applications. In 1999, Greece was deemed ready for prompt participation in the Visa Waiver Program and is the only country, among the candidates, that can join the Visa Waiver Program on the basis of current legislation. Yet, they remain in queue wondering when their friend and ally, the United States, will afford them the same opportunity enjoyed by their European neighbors.

As co-chair of the Hellenic Caucus and a Member of both this prominent Subcommittee and the Homeland Security Committee, I look forward to having an opportunity to question this distinguished panel as to their thoughts on the Visa Waiver Program.

Mr. WEXLER. Gentlemen, you have been very kind. I apologize for the delay in between. I think we have covered a fair amount. Is there anything you think we have missed that we should be talking about?

May I invite—come on. Yes, please, it is a rare occasion. You are a good friend. Is there something? Please. Please. No? Okay.

With that, the Europe Subcommittee is in recess and we are adjourned. Thank you very much.

Mr. EDSON. Thank you, sir.

[Whereupon, at 3 o'clock p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

