



## US Immigration COVID-19 Update

Pearl Cohen's US Business Immigration Group is actively monitoring COVID-19, a/k/a coronavirus, related activities. Below is a summary of the impact made on those seeking entry into the United States and on other immigration matters.

### US Citizenship and Immigration Services

- **Interviews at USCIS field offices and support centers.** Most USCIS offices and support centers continue to conduct scheduled interviews and appointments. However, USCIS alerted: if an applicant is feeling ill; or just arrived back in the U.S. from *any* country; or might have been exposed to COVID-19, USCIS asks that the interview be rescheduled. As of March 16, 2020, USCIS Field Office in Albany, NY and USCIS Support Centers in Fort Benning, GA, Fort Jackson, SC, and Fort Sill, OK are now closed.
- **Naturalization ceremonies.** Attendance of naturalization ceremonies has been restricted to just those naturalizing, family and friends are currently not allowed to attend.
- **H-1B Registration.** No changes to the closing of the H-1B e-registration process in place and set to end on March 20 at noon EST.
- **Filing and processing of USCIS applications.** No word on delays in filing of USCIS applications. As per existing USCIS policy memorandum, a copy of a signature is accepted for certain applications as long as an original document containing a handwritten, ink signature is available.

### Department of State

- **Operation of U.S. Consular posts.** Certain consular posts are temporarily closed or limited to emergency only visa services. The Department of State has compiled a list of [embassy websites for country-specific information concerning COVID-19](#).

### Immigration and Customs Enforcement

- ICE detention facilities report no COVID-19 cases, have stopped social visitation, but still permit non-contact legal visitations.
- ICE-ERO office in Ohio has ceased all office check-ins and the ICE office in Atlanta has postponed all ICE check-in appointments until the week of April 13, 2020.

## Department of Justice

- **Immigration courts remain open.** “All non-detained aliens’ master calendar hearings scheduled 03/16-04/0 are postponed. Usual operations for filings except Seattle. All other hearings proceeding.”

## Customs and Border Protection

- **Extension of ESTA and Visa Waiver Program (VWP) Periods of Admission.** Those who were admitted to the U.S. through John F. Kennedy International Airport, NY (JFK) and Newark Liberty International Airport, NJ only can request extending their stay in the United States - Satisfactory Departure – for up to 30 days.

## TRAVEL

- **The travel ban.** By way of his proclamations, the U.S. President suspended and limited entry of all individuals who were physically present during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry, within the following countries:
  - The People’s Republic of China, excluding Hong Kong and Macau.
  - The Islamic Republic of Iran.
  - Schengen area (for purposes of the proclamation): Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.
  - The United Kingdom and Ireland as of March 16, 2020.
- **Exceptions to the President’s proclamation.** Among individuals who are exempt from the proclamation are American citizens, lawful permanent residents, their immediate family members, and certain non-immigrant individuals.
- **Arrival restrictions** of individuals who have been within the aforementioned countries. There are only eleven airports in the United States that accept individuals who may have been exposed to the virus: John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) in New York, Chicago O’Hare International Airport (ORD) in Illinois, San Francisco International Airport (SFO) in California, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) in Washington, Daniel K Inouye International Airport (HNL) in Hawaii, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) in Georgia, Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) in New Jersey, Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) in Texas, Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) in Michigan, Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) in California, and Washington-Dulles International Airport (IAD) in Virginia.

*Please contact the Pearl Cohen US Business Immigration Group for any questions in connection with the above-stated.*