

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) remind the traveling public that as of Jan. 31, 2008, all adult travelers will be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, and proof of identity, such as a driver's license, when entering the United States through land and sea ports of entry. DHS will be issuing a notice in the Federal Register formally announcing the change.

This change is a necessary step to prepare travelers and ease the transition to the future requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). WHTI proposes to establish documentation requirements for travelers entering the United States who were previously exempt, including citizens of the U.S., Canada, and Bermuda. As recommended by the 9/11 Commission, Congress enacted WHTI in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. WHTI will result in both enhanced security and increased facilitation across the border once implemented. During this transition, DHS and the Department of State are working diligently to minimize the impact on legitimate trade and travel.

Currently, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers may accept oral declarations of citizenship from U.S. and Canadian citizens seeking entry into the United States through a land or sea border. However, as of January 31, 2008:

- * Oral declarations of citizenship alone will no longer be accepted
- * U.S. and Canadian citizens ages 19 and older will need to present a government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, along with proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or naturalization certificate
- * Children ages 18 and under will only be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate
- * Passports and trusted traveler program cards - NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST - will continue to be accepted for cross-border travel

All existing nonimmigrant visa and passport requirements will remain in effect and will not be altered by this change.

DOS reminds the public that the current turnaround time for a passport is four to six weeks, so Americans planning international travel may wish to apply now. For information on obtaining a U.S. Passport visit www.travel.state.gov or call 1-877-487-2778. Specific documentation requirements for land, sea and air travel may be found at www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/ready_set_go/. To learn more about NEXUS, SENTRI and FAST, visit www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted_traveler/.