

15 April 2004

The Honorable F James Sensenbrenner, Jr  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr Chairman,

BritishAmerican Business Inc would like to thank you for scheduling a hearing on 21 April 2004 on the current requirements and deadlines imposed by the Enhanced Border Security Act. We have been increasingly made aware that almost all the members of the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) will be unable to meet this deadline to begin issuing biometric passports. We gather that the US Department of State and Foreign Nations will not even be able to meet their own deadline for issuing such passports.

BritishAmerican Business Inc of New York and London (BABI) is the leading transatlantic business organisation, dedicated to helping its member companies build and expand their international business. Our membership of more than 800 companies includes many of the world's largest multinational corporations, as well as hundreds of middle market and smaller companies.

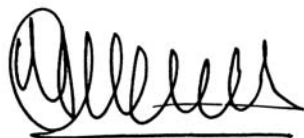
As you no doubt know, the UK-US business relationship represents the largest economic partnership between any two countries in the world, including more than \$460 billion in two-way investment, split equally between the two countries, and some \$74 billion annually in two-way trade. With our members being an important part of this bilateral trading relationship we are concerned that this deadline will have serious implications for business development and hamper the efficient running of many businesses based on both sides of the Atlantic. A failure to act could cause serious consequences both for the US and UK economies, and require a huge number of visas to be issued for any visit to the US. This will place a burden on the Department of State and their offices in the VWP countries that they simply could not bear, given current resources or even a very substantial increase in those resources.

Extension of the deadline would enable all the Governments involved to deal with the real practical, technical, cultural and logistical issues that need to be overcome in order to create an effective, durable and universally acceptable biometric passport. There seems to be a strong level of confidence that such a goal could be reached in the course of the next two years. However, if the US holds its current deadline, many hundreds of thousands of business travellers and leisure visitors who journey from the UK to the US will face significant inconvenience. In reality, that will mean that many such travellers will opt either not to make their journey or to travel to an alternative destination.

As strong supporters of the 'special relationship' that exists between the UK and the US, BABI urges you and your Committee to press for an extension of the current Visa Waiver Programme until 31 December 2006. We accordingly urge you and your Committee to put legislation in place to postpone this deadline until this time.

We are grateful for your efforts to address this important matter and look forward to the outcome of the hearing on 21 April.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Stopps CBE, Chairman  
BritishAmerican Business Inc