

Visa Bond Pilot Program for B-1 (Business) / B-2 (Tourist) / ESTA (Visa Waiver Program)

A new Visa Bond Pilot Program effective January 21, 2026, requires nationals of designated countries to pay a \$10,000 bond (or \$5,000 or \$15,000, depending on personal circumstances) as a condition of B-1/B-2 visa issuance or ESTA. The full bond amount is to be later returned to the foreign national if the government determines that the individual complied with the terms of their visa classification in the United States and either departed prior to the end of their authorized stay, or timely and properly filed an extension of stay or change of status application.

Visas issued under the pilot program are valid for three months and a single entry to the United States. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will admit these visa holders for a maximum stay of 30 days in most cases.

A full list of countries subject to the new Visa Bond Pilot Program is posted on the Department of State Consular Affairs website at travel.state.gov. Since the program creation in August 2025, the State Department has periodically added a few countries to the program's country list, each time announcing the additions on the [State Department website](https://state.gov).

It has been noted that the State Department reserves the right to change the list of countries and says it will provide at least 15 days' notice before making changes. In its temporary final rule, the State Department estimates that visa bonds will be required for 2,000 visa applicants during the pilot program.

For departments wishing to invite visitors to attend business meetings, conferences, symposiums, etc., will need to be mindful of the current travel bans and new visa bond program. ISSS can provide a sample invitation letter upon request.