



Association of American Universities

July 2, 2003

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
State, and Judiciary
House Committee on Appropriations
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf:

I write on behalf of the undersigned higher education associations to inform you of our significant concerns related to our nation's visa system and to request that additional funding be included in the FY2004 Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary Appropriations bill for the State Department to facilitate the implementation of new visa policies.

Current policies are hampering the ability of the world's best and brightest international students, scholars, and researchers to study and work in our country and to contribute to our nation's science and technology enterprise, economy, and security. We support the Federal government's efforts to strengthen homeland and national security through the visa issuance process. We also applaud the thrust of the Federal government's "Secure Borders. Open Doors." initiative. However, we have some serious concerns about visa policy and implementation. We have articulated these concerns in the attached letter sent to Secretary of State Colin Powell last month.

One of these concerns pertains to the recent change to visa interview policies that requires nearly all foreign individuals seeking to visit the U.S. to be interviewed (see attached for State Department cable #136100 dated May 21, 2003). Specifically, we are concerned that this new policy is to be implemented by August 1, 2003, but *without* additional resources. As the cable to consular posts announcing this new policy clearly states "many posts will face processing backlogs for the indefinite future." We share this pessimistic assessment, and believe that without a commensurate increase in resources to accommodate the substantial increase in workload that will result from this new requirement, there will be even more delays than there already have been for international students, scholars, and researchers who seek to study in the U.S.

We strongly urge that sufficient appropriations be made to the State Department in FY2004 to implement the new visa interview requirement and that it be phased in gradually by country and security risk rather than all at once.

Higher education and science are international activities. If the U.S. is to remain the world's leader in higher education, science, and technology, we must have a visa system that is secure, timely, efficient, transparent, and predictable; that will permit scientific exchange and collaboration; and that enhances homeland security. We stand ready to work with the Congress and the State Department to accomplish these goals. We thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,



Nils Hasselmo
President, AAU

On behalf of:

Association of American Universities
American Council on Education
Council of Graduate Schools
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Identical letters sent to:

The Honorable José E. Serrano, Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary
The Honorable C.W. Bill Young, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable David R. Obey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Ted Stevens, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Judd Gregg, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary
The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary

Attachment