



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

June 1, 2023

The Honorable
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

Thank you for your March 30 letter expressing concerns regarding passport processing times and the responsiveness of our customer service teams. As you note, passport services are experiencing unprecedented demand, and we continue to hire and to train staff to meet this record workload.

The State Department's Passport Services staff has been in their offices since summer 2020 and is working tens of thousands of hours of overtime a month. In addition, our managers and headquarters personnel are assisting with both adjudication and processing and we have surged staff from across the Department to assist with processing passport applications. We will continue aggressively recruiting new staff until we have enough adjudicators to meet demand without the current surge efforts.

In the interim, we are on average issuing passports faster than our advertised service commitments despite receiving roughly 500,000 applications a week. To answer your specific questions, as of April 20, there were only 385 passport applications received before February 1 that were still pending adjudication. Between January 1 and April 20, our staff served over 268,000 customers with emergency or urgent travel at our counters, another 47,000 through courier services, and we issued over 5.5 million passports for customers who applied through the mail.

We have improved our responsiveness to Congressional offices and to the general public through concentrated efforts. The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) now has a third contact center site in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and is aggressively adding staff. NPIC reports that there have been no busy signals for callers since April 10 after intense work with AT&T to increase trunk capacity with newer technology. The contact center phone system has a “virtual hold” feature (aka Callback Assist) offered during certain times of the day. We also have a Passport Headquarters Task Force assisting NPIC with requests to upgrade applications and address changes.

We thank you for your interest in our work and for your recognition of the many moving parts needed to issue more than 22 million passport books and cards last year. We would be happy to meet with you and other interested Congressional offices to explain the steps that we have taken to date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Naz Durakoglu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Naz Durakoglu
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs