



Equal Protection in Travel

Background

Originally passed as part of the Omnibus bill in December 2015, the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act (VWP Act) is a reactionary tool being implemented by Congress to profile based on national origin and/or family heritage. Under the VWP Act, individuals who are dual nationals of, or have traveled to, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011 are prohibited from traveling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. This mandatory bar to all persons who are dual citizens is discriminatory and does not advance U.S. national security or law enforcement interests.

Solution

Please support and co-sponsor The Equal Protection in Travel Act of 2016 (EPTA) H.R. 4380 and S.2449. The EPTA would repeal recent dual nationality restrictions to the Visa Waiver Program that discriminate on the basis of national origin or family heritage. Further, this act has been written in recognition that restrictions based on national heritage do not protect our national security and that in fact, they are contrary to our core American values of justice and equality under law.

Why support the Equal Protection in Travel Act?

- **Save money and conserve valuable resources:** Targeting individuals based on national origin or family heritage would divert resources from legitimate law enforcement activities. An individual's national origin or family heritage is not a valid or useful criterion by which to judge whether they pose a security threat. Devoting resources to screen people based on their place of birth, residence, national origin, or family heritage is a diversion of resources and counterproductive to securing our nation.
- **Help law enforcement gain trust with minority communities:** Targeting dual nationals also risks exacerbating a wedge of distrust between law enforcement and affected communities. Engaging in profiling against members of these communities will only serve to undermine communication and cooperation between these communities.
- **Protect international relations with U.S. allies:** Excluding persons from the VWP based on these criteria risks undermining relationships and cooperation between the United States and its closest allies. This risks making the United States less secure. The European Union has already stated that it may suspend the VWP program for all Americans, which would reduce important intelligence sharing and other cooperative efforts, as well as economic opportunities.
- **Racial Profiling against Americans:** VWP countries may enact similar restrictions against Americans because the VWP is based on reciprocity. Any EU-imposed travel restriction would impact over 740,000 American citizens solely based on their national origin and/or family heritage. European Union countries have indicated that reciprocal measures under the VWP excluding U.S. dual citizens is a real possibility.

Legislative Ask:

Please support and co-sponsor the **Equal Protection in Travel Act (EPTA) of 2016 (H.R. 4380/S.2449)**. EPTA would repeal recent dual nationality restrictions to the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) that discriminate based on national origin or family heritage.