



Policy Resolution 2019-01

Foreign Visitor Preclearance

A. **BACKGROUND**

1. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that nearly 76 million foreign visitors entered the country during 2016. The vast majority of these travelers arrived in the United States by plane.¹
2. Tourism is a significant revenue source for western states and territories, many of which count international travelers as major contributors to state and local economies and look to international tourism to drive local employment.
3. As a result of utilizing technology such as Automated Passport Control equipment, average wait time at airport passport and immigration processing areas have declined in recent years, but still frequently exceeds 60 minutes.²
4. Foreign visitor preclearance allows international travelers to be screened by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers prior to boarding an international flight. This preclearance allows passengers to bypass U.S. customs stations upon arrival at an American airport.
5. The Transportation Security Administration requires passenger and property screening at foreign preclearance airports to conform with U.S. aviation security screening standards.
6. Preclearance arrangements between the U.S. and Canada began in 1952. Since that time, CBP has established over 600 American law enforcement officers and agricultural specialists at 15 preclearance airports in six countries: Ireland, Canada, Aruba, The Bahamas, Bermuda and United Arab Emirates. CBP also staffs a pre-inspection facility for passenger/vehicle ferry traffic to the U.S. in Victoria, Canada.³
7. While there were earlier announcements in 2015 and 2016 to possibly expand the preclearance program to eleven new airports in nine countries, CBP has only concluded agreements to cover Stockholm, Sweden (signed November 4, 2016), and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic (signed December 1, 2016).⁴
8. In FY2017, CBP precleared more than 19 million passengers.⁵

¹ International Trade Administration Fast Facts, http://tinnet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/Fast_Facts_2016.pdf

² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Airport Wait Times, <https://awt.cbp.gov/>

³ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Preclearance Locations, <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/ports-entry/operations/preclearance>

⁴ "DHS Announces 11 New Airports Selected For Possible Preclearance Expansion Following Second Open Season" <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2016/11/04/dhs-announces-11-new-airports-selected-possible-preclearance-expansion-following>

⁵ Remarks of Acting Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan at Press Event Marking Release of CBP's Trade and Travel Fiscal Year 2017 Report, February 13, 2018, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/speeches-and-statements/remarks-acting-commissioner-kevin-k-mcaleenan-press-event-marking>

9. The DHS has supported preclearance as both a security imperative – enabling CBP to identify and stop potential terror threats before they reach U.S. soil – and a strong economic opportunity.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. In recognition of the economic and national security benefits provided by foreign visitor preclearance, Western Governors support CBP's use of preclearance to reduce excessive wait times at American immigration and processing areas.
2. Western Governors support the efforts of DHS and CBP to increase the number of international airports and countries at which foreign visitor preclearance is used. Such expansion will streamline legitimate international travel and will further protect the safety and security of American citizens as well as international visitors.
3. Preclearance also allows smaller airports with no or few full-time CBP personnel to accept direct international flights from preclearance-approved foreign airports. Western Governors recognize the benefit this provides small or rural airports in accepting international travelers more efficiently.
4. In recognition of the benefits provided by foreign visitor preclearance, and in order to expand its use, DHS should work to complete the negotiation process with foreign countries and add new preclearance-approved international airports as soon as possible.
5. Additionally, DHS and CBP should work with western states to help identify optimal international foreign visitor preclearance airports for future consideration and should work with western state tourism directors to expand international travel opportunities in western states.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a bi-annual basis. Please consult westgov.org/resolutions for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.