

## Castle Helps Pass Passport Backlog Bill -- July 17, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle helped approve legislation yesterday that would aid in alleviating the backlog of passport requests by rehiring Foreign Service retirees. New requirements set in place in January required a passport for all travelers entering the United States when traveling by air from Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean, which caused a rush for passports. Rep. Castle says that while this new requirement is important when it comes to improving national security, the legislation passed unanimously by the House yesterday will help to ensure thousands of people do not miss their trips.

"There has been a serious backlog of applications, and my office in Wilmington has been working extremely hard to ensure that nobody misses their travel date. Nevertheless, this addition of more workers -- who are trained and know the process -- will be a great benefit to alleviate the stress of many people who are uncertain as to when they will receive their passport. I hope to see the legislation quickly move through the Senate to the President to assist the millions of people who will need and are still waiting for passports," said Castle.

The legislation would allow for retirees, who already have been trained, to be temporarily rehired while keeping their retirement benefits. The current law allows for retirees who are rehired to work no more than six months of the year, and the money they can earn is limited because their retirement benefits may be reduced. The House added language to the Senate bill (S. 966) allowing these rehired workers to assist with passport fraud investigations through September 20, 2009. The measure is expected to be approved by the Senate and sent to the President this month.

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