

**June 11, 2007**

**WASHINGTON** - Today U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) expressed his concern about new passport rules that have significantly reduced the speed of passport processing. These new rules, affecting American travel in the Western Hemisphere, has caused a processing backlog leaving many Americans with incredibly long wait times and the prospect of even having to cancel their summer travel plans.

"Since February, my office has personally intervened on behalf of more than 100 cases for constituents caught in the current passport backlog," said Bilirakis. "Although I strongly support the new passport rules, it is important that they are implemented in a manner that does not negatively impact citizens seeking to travel. These delays in passport processing are evidence that more work needs to be done to ready the system before moving forward."

Today, the federal government announced a temporary relaxation of these new passport regulations. Bilirakis did express confidence in the Administration's recent steps to work toward remedying the problem.

"I am pleased that the federal government is being responsive to the needs of Americans during this busy summer travel season," said Bilirakis. "This adjustment will allow many other Americans to enjoy their family vacations, while the government works on fixing this problem. As a member of both the House Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs Committees, I intend to keep a close eye on this situation."

The federal government's announcement that it will be relaxing its new passport rules informs U.S. citizens who have applied for, but not yet received passports and are traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will be allowed to enter and leave from the United States by air provided that they present a government issued photo identification and Department of State official proof of application for a passport.

This accommodation lasts until **September 30, 2007**. Travelers with pending passport applications can obtain proof of application at:

<http://travel.state.gov>

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