

## Cross Border Business Law Blog

# Travel Series: The U.S. Passport

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A big part of international business centers on logistics. Shipping and transport are certainly important, but I'm talking about logistics of a more prosaic bent, personal travel. Specifically, the ways we get businesspeople from Country A to Country B. And as it so happens, a critical piece in how Americans travel abroad has been in the news quite a bit—the passport.

From news involving passports in terrorist activities, to marking passports of those individuals convicted of certain crimes, to passports with unflattering pictures of NBA players, passports are newsworthy. And as *The New York Times* recently [explained](#), 2016 is expected to be a banner year for United States passport renewals. This is partly due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative taking effect in 2007. This Initiative was the first time passports were required for Americans traveling by air from Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. It's now almost ten years later, which means that passports issued the year before the Initiative started, are expiring.

With that background in mind, it seemed useful to provide some basic information on U.S. passports and associated requirements.

- It takes approximately six weeks to get a passport on a routine basis. One can arrange for expedited processing in three weeks, or eight business days at an agency (when need can be shown and certain restrictions don't apply). If you have questions about the process, click [here](#).
- The U.S. permits dual citizenship (and therefore dual passports), but some other countries do not. Because citizenship can affect your rights and obligations, please be sure to consider any change in citizenship carefully.
- The passport originally served primarily as a way of introducing the bearer aboard. Before World War II, the U.S. federal government required passports only during a few periods of war: around the times of the American Civil War and World War I.

- During the 20th century, world governments worked to standardize the passport form. This work culminated in 1980 and resulted in the booklet used today.
  
- Although it is unlawful for U.S. citizens to enter or exit the U.S. without a valid U.S. passport, U.S. border control will not deny U.S. citizens re-entry. That said, re-entry for U.S. citizens without a passport is unlawful and re-entry without a passport likely is not a gentle or quick process.

In a future installment we will introduce basic information about enhanced traveler programs for U.S. citizens.

**Tags:** enhanced traveler programs, international business, passport renewals, passports, personal travel, U.S. citizen, U.S. citizens re-entry, U.S. dual citizenship, U.S. passport, Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative