Aires seeks to keep its clients updated on the evolving landscape of US immigration policy, specifically those policy announcements that may be impactful to corporate mobility professionals.

**US In-Person Visa Interview Policy Tightened**

The U.S. Department of State updated information last week that visa renewal rules pertaining to interview waivers would be shifted and restricted. In particular, the eligibility for the Visa Interview Waiver would be reduced from 48 months to 12 months. Additionally, even if the timing requirement is met then applicants must be renewing their visa in the same category to be eligible for the interview waiver. From a timing perspective, this means that an individual with a visa stamp expiration date more than 12 months past will now have to attend a visa interview, even if they were otherwise eligible for an interview waiver. Moving the timing requirement from 48 months to 12 months represents a fairly significant change.

These changes will undoubtedly impact popular visa categories, including H-1B and B1/B2, creating longer appointment wait times and more congestion at consulates abroad.

As a result, mobility professionals should carefully communicate visa waiver and stamp renewal protocols to foreign nationals working in the US and ensure that they are aware of the potential logistical challenges of securing appointments. Booking and attending appointments at the Consulate will add an additional layer to the visa renewal process, which could be challenging to manage in conjunction with international travel. It will also be important that mobility teams have a standard protocol for obtaining visa expiration dates and tracking/monitoring this and the 12-month grace period on behalf of the employee. Or, in the absence of that tracking mechanism for the employee, employers should clearly communicate the responsibility to the foreign national in their policies and updates.

**Trump Announces Creation of “Gold Card”**

This week, President Donald Trump announced a new visa program for investors – referenced as a “Gold Card.” Details of the plan are forthcoming, but President Trump in an interview with reporters said that the program would be available in the next couple of weeks.

The Gold Card would likely replace the current EB-5 program and is touted as requiring a $5 million USD investment in the US with such funds likely to be remitted directly to the US Government. It is not known what other requirements will exist, but items discussed in President Trump’s interview mentioned that it is not necessarily required that the individual has any other commitments from an investment standpoint (ie, job creating or business creating) other than making the payment.

During the Gold Visa announcement, President Trump also referred to a potential opportunity that US employers could pay the Gold Visa cost on behalf of employees. Details of this are currently unknown as of the creation of this bulletin.

It is worth noting that during the Gold Card announcement President Trump indicated a willingness to create additional pathways for employers to hire exceptional talent in the United States in an easier fashion than is currently available. This could lead to speculation for mobility professionals that there is some interest in maintaining or increasing employment-sponsored immigration levels.

**Migrant Protections Put into Place by Biden Administration to be Paused**
The Trump Administration has put a freeze in place for the following programs: Uniting for Ukraine, the Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) program, and a program for Colombians, Ecuadorians, Central Americans, Haitians, and Cubans who have U.S. citizen relatives and have filed a family-based green card.

These were Biden Administration policies and will remain paused until the U.S. reviews any alleged fraud and vetting policies.

**Acting Director of ICE Reassigned**
The current Acting Director of ICE, Caleb Vitello, has been reassigned and a replacement Director has yet to be named. Additionally, the Trump Administration selected Madison D. Sheahan to serve as the Deputy Director of ICE.

**IRS Agents Deputized**

DSH Secretary Kristi Noem has deputized IRS employees and DOJ employees to help in immigration enforcement efforts. This will provide more resources to the US Government to enforce compliance within different facets of US immigration, including corporate sponsored immigration visa types.