

Murphy Alerts Connecticut Residents to Passport Delay Crisis, Offers Congressional Assistance

As many Fifth District families prepare to travel in August, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) today hosted a press conference to offer his assistance to constituents who find themselves without a passport required for upcoming travel.

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WASHINGTON, DC – As many Fifth District families prepare to travel in August, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) today hosted a press conference to offer his assistance to constituents who find themselves without a passport required for upcoming travel. In January, federal rules went into effect requiring passports for all citizens for all air travel to or from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. Many Americans have been unaware of this change in policy until right before their travel date, and the National Passport Center has been inundated with passport renewals and applications. Since January, Murphy has been able to resolve more than 150 passport issues for vacation, honeymoon, business, family emergency, school, and church travel.

"As families look forward to vacations, newlyweds plan their honeymoons, and school and church groups make travel plans, they need to know that they must get their passport in order long before their trip. Unfortunately, the new federal rules are creating a logjam in processing passport paperwork. I am here to help those who find themselves in a situation where they may not be able to travel," said Murphy.

Today, Murphy was joined by Mike Walewski of Southbury, Stanley and Helen Chmielewski of New Britain, and Scott Kipphut of Meriden who have had trouble applying for or renewing a passport for travel before their planned trips and sought Murphy's assistance to expedite their passport.

To alleviate the pressure the new rules were putting on passport processing staff, in early June, the Departments of State and Homeland Security announced that U.S. citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and/or Bermuda and have applied for, but not yet received, passports can temporarily enter and depart the U.S. without a passport. However, they must have a government-issued ID (i.e. a driver's license) and the Department of State official proof of application for a passport. At this time, this accommodation is expected to be in effect until September 30, 2007.

Murphy and his colleagues in Congress are working to find a long term solution to this crisis. On June 15, Murphy voted for an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2008 Homeland Security appropriations bill which prohibits the use of funds, prior to June 1, 2009, to implement the requirement of passports for all land, sea and air travel to or from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. This amendment has not been signed into law by the President.

Today, Congress will consider S. 966, The Passport Backlog Reduction Act, which permits the State Department to waive certain restrictions on the re-employment of retired Foreign Service officers in order to meet the passport demand.

"Until we have a signed law in hand to deal with this problem in the long term, Connecticut residents who need a valid passport in the coming months should start the process now. And if they fear they will not get their passport in time, they should absolutely contact my office," said Murphy.

Murphy and his staff can be most helpful to constituents who are within 2 weeks of their travel date and still have not received their passport, or anyone with a travel emergency that needs a passport immediately.

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