

July 17, 2007: Sanchez Supports Legislation to Ease Passport Backlog

SANCHEZ SUPPORTS LEGISLATION TO EASE PASSPORT BACKLOG

Yesterday, Rep. Loretta Sanchez joined the House of Representatives in voting to ease the backlog that has made it difficult for Americans to receive passports. The legislation was unanimously approved by the House on a voice vote.

"My office has heard from countless constituents who have missed vacations or waited months to receive a passport," said Sanchez. "This common sense legislation will make it easier for the State Department to process applications and send travelers on their way."

"The current passport delays are symptomatic of the ongoing problems the Department of Homeland Security has had in making critical decisions related to the Western Hemisphere Travel initiative in a timely fashion."

Sanchez, vice-chair of the Homeland Security Committee has expressed constituent concerns, calling the situation "unacceptable" in a letter to Secretary Condoleezza Rice.

Passport requests skyrocketed following the implementation of a new law requiring Americans traveling by air to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda to hold a passport. The increase has resulted in significant delays with many waiting months to receive a passport.

The Passport Backlog Reduction Act gives the State Department the authority to hire retired former staffers who are trained and authorized to process passport applications. Current law denies retirement benefits to these retirees if they exceed strict wages earned and hours worked caps. The legislation approved by the House waives these requirements and makes it possible for the retired workers to return to work and help ease the passport shortage.

Constituents needing assistance with delayed passports should contact the office of Rep. Loretta Sanchez at (714) 621-0102.