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3RD DISTRICT, ARIZONA  
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April 20, 2023

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write to express my concern regarding the increase in wait times for passport applications that my constituents in Arizona are facing. The significant application backlog is overwhelming our district office and burdens those traveling abroad, especially Arizonans traveling for emergencies or family matters. Being a border state, Arizona is an economic hub for our country, where frequent travel across the border with a passport is necessary.

As you know, the State Department is experiencing a 30 to 40 percent increase in the number of weekly applications compared to last year. This has caused an increase in published routine processing times, from six to nine weeks at the start of the year to ten to thirteen weeks today. An "expedited" passport now takes seven to nine weeks to complete. These timelines, which do not include the two-week timeframe for an application to arrive at the processing center, are hurting my constituents.

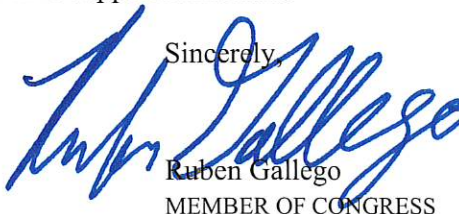
My constituents are also facing a two to three months delay in accessing appointments at their local Post Office – if they can even get an appointment. The United States Postal Service is an integral cog in the passport application and renewal system, providing photos and a venue to submit applications.

Although I believe the State Department can support my constituents better, I want to commend those working at the Western Passport Center in Tucson, Arizona, and other processing facilities nationwide. I encourage the Department to surge additional resources to site locations like the Western Passport Center to aid our hardworking federal employees as they process the increased passport applications we are likely to see over the summer.

As we prepare for summer travel, I request your support in reducing inefficiencies in the passport application process and providing greater transparency for Arizonans. I also urge you to work closely with the USPS to increase appointment availability and reduce application transit time.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important issue. Please inform me of any additional resources or authorities you may need to support Arizonans.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS