

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
TO H.R. 6610  
OFFERED BY MR. ISSA OF CALIFORNIA**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the  
3 “Passport System Reform and Backlog Prevention Act”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for  
5 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Findings.
- Sec. 3. Sense of Congress.
- Sec. 4. Standards for passport issuance process.
- Sec. 5. Enhanced information technology solutions to improve the passport issuance process.
- Sec. 6. Research on commercially available information technology solutions.
- Sec. 7. GAO Report.
- Sec. 8. Rule of construction.
- Sec. 9. Definitions.

**6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the  
9 United States experienced a major backlog of pass-  
10 port applications and passport processing wait times  
11 of up to 13 weeks, exclusive of shipping times.

1           (2) Over the past several years, the Department  
2           has experienced repeated delays in its attempts to  
3           modernize the passport issuance process.

4           (3) The adoption of additional commercially  
5           available information technology solutions at several  
6           stages of the passport issuance process could greatly  
7           enhance and accelerate such process.

8           (4) The United States passport is a widely rec-  
9           ognized and trusted identity and travel document  
10          that is of tremendous importance to its bearer  
11          around the globe.

12 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

13          It is the sense of Congress that—

14               (1) as a routine matter, an adult who has sub-  
15               mitted a routine new or renewal passport application  
16               should be reliably able to expect that such applica-  
17               tion will be adjudicated by the Department, at a rea-  
18               sonable cost, in a time frame which is conducive to  
19               international travel;

20               (2) the Department should seek to further mod-  
21               ernize and streamline the passport issuance process  
22               to enable a decrease in processing times below pre-  
23               pandemic levels of six-to-eight weeks, specifically for  
24               routine adult passport renewals with respect to

1 which the Department should seek to decrease aver-  
2 age processing times to less than 30 days; and

3 (3) the Department should take all reasonable  
4 steps, including the use of available technology and  
5 best practices, to protect the integrity of the pass-  
6 port issuance process, the privacy of passport hold-  
7 ers, and the efficiency of processing passport  
8 issuance requests.

9 **SEC. 4. STANDARDS FOR PASSPORT ISSUANCE PROCESS.**

10 In administering and modernizing the passport  
11 issuance process, the Assistant Secretary shall evaluate  
12 the performance of such process against the following cri-  
13 teria:

14 (1) To maintain a service standard of proc-  
15 essing a routine new or renewal adult passport appli-  
16 cation from document submission until mailing of  
17 final documents in an expeditious and reliable time-  
18 frame.

19 (2) To maintain affordable passport fees and  
20 surcharges.

21 (3) To ensure world-class technical, security,  
22 and cybersecurity standards for United States pass-  
23 ports and the passport issuance process.

24 (4) To minimize downtime for the Travel Docu-  
25 ment Issuance System.

1           (5) To minimize the suspense rate resulting  
2           from typographical, clerical, or picture-based errors,  
3           including by enabling such suspensions to be re-  
4           solved electronically.

5           (6) To provide a streamlined customer experi-  
6           ence for passport applicants.

7           (7) To provide reasonably convenient passport  
8           services to United States citizens and nationals liv-  
9           ing a significant distance from a passport agency,  
10          particularly residents in a significant population cen-  
11          ter more than a 5-hour drive from a passport agen-  
12          cy.

13 **SEC. 5. ENHANCED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLU-**  
14                   **TIONS TO IMPROVE THE PASSPORT**  
15                   **ISSUANCE PROCESS.**

16          (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Assistant Secretary, in con-  
17          sultation with the Chief Information Officer, shall imple-  
18          ment the information technology solutions described in  
19          subsection (b) in accordance with the timelines described  
20          in such subsection.

21          (b) **ENHANCED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLU-**  
22          **TIONS AND TIMELINES DESCRIBED.**—The enhanced infor-  
23          mation technology solutions and timelines described in this  
24          subsection are the following:

1           (1) Not later than 2 years after the date of the  
2           enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary, in  
3           consultation with the Chief Information Officer,  
4           shall, including if necessary through the awarding of  
5           a contract or expanding an existing, establish a tool  
6           to enable congressional offices to monitor the status  
7           of individual passport applications being handled as  
8           casework by such offices.

9           (2)(A) Not later than 2 years after the date of  
10          the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary,  
11          in consultation with the Chief Information Officer,  
12          shall take all reasonable steps, including if necessary  
13          the awarding of a contract for the establishment and  
14          ongoing maintenance of a service to provide to pass-  
15          port applicants automated, voluntary proactive com-  
16          munications, by email or text message, for each  
17          progress point in the passport issuance process, and  
18          for the notification of application errors, and deliv-  
19          ery of mail tracking numbers, and reminders of re-  
20          newal eligibility.

21          (B) Applicants shall be provided the choice of  
22          whether to use the services described in subpara-  
23          graph (A) and data gained as a result of participa-  
24          tion in such services shall not be transferred to any

1 third party outside the Department or its contract  
2 awardees.

3 (C) The services described in subparagraph (A)  
4 shall provide separate options for email and text  
5 message notification, as well as separate options for  
6 processing-related notifications and renewal eligi-  
7 bility notifications.

8 (3)(A) Consistent with the Bureau's moderniza-  
9 tion plans and timelines, and subject to the avail-  
10 ability of funds, the Assistant Secretary, in consulta-  
11 tion with the Chief Information Officer, shall seek to  
12 enter into a contract or contracts as appropriate, for  
13 the establishment and maintenance of a mobile ap-  
14 plication to allow for the centralization of applicant  
15 communication with the Department, including doc-  
16 ument submission, application status tracking, vir-  
17 tual appointments, access to the notification of ap-  
18 plication errors, and allowing for passport holders to  
19 receive messages from the Department and commu-  
20 nicate emergencies to the Department.

21 (B) The Assistant Secretary shall provide each  
22 passport applicant with the option of whether to use  
23 the mobile application described in subparagraph  
24 (A) or another service of the Department.

1 (C) As a condition for awarding any contracts  
2 described in subparagraph (A), the awardee shall  
3 demonstrate that it can begin tests on the solution  
4 within one year of the award of the contract and  
5 complete implementation, including bug fixes, cyber-  
6 security audits, and customer service testing, not  
7 later than two years from the award of the contract.

8 (4)(A) Consistent with existing law, the Assist-  
9 ant Secretary, in consultation with the Chief Infor-  
10 mation Officer, shall expand the online passport re-  
11 newal system, including to accommodate electronic  
12 acceptance of routine first-time adult applications as  
13 applicable, in addition to adult renewal applications  
14 in sufficient volume to be able to accommodate most  
15 applications by the date that is four years from the  
16 date of enactment of this Act.

17 (B) Planning carried out to implement subpara-  
18 graph (A) shall prepare the Bureau to verify appli-  
19 cations without recourse to the information gained  
20 through appearance in person described in section 1  
21 of the Act of June 15, 1917 (22 U.S.C. 213), sub-  
22 ject to any additional authorities required.

23 (C) To meet the objectives described in sub-  
24 paragraphs (A) and (B), the Assistant Secretary, in  
25 consultation with the Chief Information Officer,

1 shall, to the maximum extent practicable, make use  
2 of commercially-available technology solutions, in-  
3 cluding by seeking to enter into a contract or con-  
4 tracts for the expansion and maintenance of the on-  
5 line passport renewal system to accommodate the  
6 functionality described in such subparagraphs.

7 (D) In expanding the online passport renewal  
8 system pursuant to subparagraph (C), the following  
9 services should be included or otherwise accounted  
10 for:

11 (i) A customer-friendly, user-friendly inter-  
12 net website or portal to facilitate internet-based  
13 submission of passport applications by adults.

14 (ii) To the extent possible, remote docu-  
15 ment verification tools and infrastructure, to  
16 allow for a passport transaction to be completed  
17 entirely remotely.

18 (iii) To the extent possible, information  
19 technology infrastructure not already main-  
20 tained by the Department.

21 (5)(A) The Assistant Secretary, in consultation  
22 with the Chief Information Officer, shall take all  
23 reasonable steps and to the maximum extent prac-  
24 ticable make use of commercially-available tech-  
25 nology solutions to implement additional rules-based



1 tools, including by seeking to enter into a contract  
2 or contracts for such tools and their maintenance, to  
3 adjudicate online passport renewal applications in  
4 which no biographical information was changed for  
5 citizenship, identity, and entitlement against internal  
6 and commercial databases.

7 (B) The tools described in subparagraph (A)  
8 shall be fully operational within 4 years of the date  
9 of the enactment of this Act.

10 (C) The Chief Information Officer shall ensure  
11 that the use of the tools do not make passport adju-  
12 dication more vulnerable to cyberattack.

13 (D) The Assistant Secretary, in consultation  
14 with the Chief Information Officer, shall ensure that  
15 the tools described in subparagraph (A) are imple-  
16 mented consistent with the maintenance of stand-  
17 ards appropriate to ensuring the integrity of the  
18 United States passport.

19 (E) For purposes of using the tools described in  
20 subparagraph (A), the requirement that a passport  
21 be issued by the personnel described in the first sec-  
22 tion of the Act entitled “An Act to regulate the issue  
23 and validity of passports, and for other purposes”,  
24 approved July 3, 1926 (22 U.S.C. 211a), shall be  
25 satisfied provided that such personnel oversee the

1 tools described in such subparagraph consistent with  
2 the requirements in subparagraph (D).

3 (c) CERTIFICATION.—In addition to other require-  
4 ments in this section, not later than 30 days before the  
5 Assistant Secretary begins work to procure internally any  
6 of the information technology solutions described in sub-  
7 section (b), the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with  
8 the Chief Information Officer, shall certify to the appro-  
9 priate congressional committees that—

10 (1) the reasons for procuring such service inter-  
11 nally;

12 (2) the Bureau has sufficient capacity to imple-  
13 ment and maintain such services; and

14 (3) the Bureau cannot procure such services for  
15 significantly reduced cost externally.

16 (d) PREFERENCE.—In procuring and implementing  
17 the information technology solutions described in sub-  
18 section (b), preference should be given to entities with the  
19 technical expertise necessary for the project and capacity  
20 to deliver timely solutions.

21 (e) ROLE OF CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chief Information Offi-  
23 cer's concurrence shall be required before the Assist-  
24 ant Secretary awards a contract pursuant to this  
25 section.

1           (2) RELATING TO SYSTEMS.—With respect to  
2 the contracting and implementation of the systems  
3 described in subsection (b), the Chief Information  
4 Officer shall have—

5           (A) final decision making authority on the  
6 technical feasibility and specifications, cyberse-  
7 curity requirements, compatibility with existing  
8 Department information technology infrastruc-  
9 ture, and the feasibility of timelines from a  
10 technical standpoint; and

11           (B) final approval of all technical matters  
12 before full implementation.

13           (3) EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS.—In selecting  
14 the services described in subsection (b), the Assist-  
15 ant Secretary and the Chief Information Officer  
16 shall include in the criteria for selection—

17           (A) the ability of the proposal to maintain  
18 security, including the cybersecurity, standards  
19 appropriate to the United States passport and  
20 to protect personally identifiable information;

21           (B) scalability to accommodate current and  
22 future passport demand; and

23           (C) long-term viability and upgradability.

24           (f) INTERIM ACTION PLAN.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year  
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the As-  
3 sistant Secretary, in consultation with the Chief In-  
4 formation Officer, shall submit to the appropriate  
5 congressional committees an action plan on how the  
6 Bureau plans to complete the modernization de-  
7 scribed in this section in conjunction with other re-  
8 lated, ongoing steps to modernize the passport  
9 issuance process.

10           (2) ELEMENTS.—The action plan required by  
11 paragraph (1) shall include the following elements:

12           (A) Progress made on implementing the  
13 information technology solutions described in  
14 subsection (b) within specific timelines, and ad-  
15 ditional steps planned.

16           (B) The expected cost and timeline for im-  
17 plementation of the information technology so-  
18 lutions described in subsection (b).

19           (C) An evaluation of the information tech-  
20 nology solutions described in subsection (b) to  
21 determine whether the full implementation of  
22 such solutions will require additional funding or  
23 authorities, including budget estimates and a  
24 description of such authorities, as appropriate.

1 (D) Efforts to ensure world-class cyberse-  
2 curity standards for protection of passport ap-  
3 plicant data and the passport issuance process  
4 infrastructure, particularly such infrastructure  
5 involved in adjudication of passport applica-  
6 tions.

7 (E) Other specific planned steps that the  
8 Bureau will take to achieve the criteria de-  
9 scribed in section 4.

10 (g) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 4 years after the  
11 date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary,  
12 in consultation with the Chief Information Officer, shall  
13 submit to the appropriate congressional committees a re-  
14 port on the following:

15 (1) Progress on each information technology so-  
16 lution described in subsection (b).

17 (2) Additional information technology solutions  
18 the Bureau intends to adopt.

19 (3) Changes in the cost for implementation of  
20 the steps described in the action plan, if applicable.

21 (h) FORM.—The plans and report required by this  
22 section shall be submitted in an unclassified form and may  
23 include a classified annex, if necessary.

1 **SEC. 6. RESEARCH ON COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE INFOR-**  
2 **MATION TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the  
4 enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary, in coordi-  
5 nation with the Chief Information Officer, shall establish  
6 a working group of appropriate Department employees,  
7 and contractors as appropriate, to liaise with the private  
8 sector for the purposes of identifying commercially avail-  
9 able technologies that may be adopted by the Bureau to  
10 advance the criteria described in section 4, evaluating pro-  
11 posed technological solutions, and augmenting the Bu-  
12 reau’s ongoing modernization efforts.

13 (b) COMPOSITION.—The working group established  
14 pursuant to subsection (a) shall be composed of personnel  
15 who can consult on the policy, legal, and technical aspects  
16 of the passport issuance process with entities that wish  
17 to provide such technologies to the Department.

18 (c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date  
19 of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary, in  
20 coordination with the Chief Information Officer, shall sub-  
21 mit to the appropriate congressional committees a re-  
22 port—

23 (1) describing the usefulness of the working  
24 group to the Department’s ongoing modernization  
25 efforts and its reception by private sector actors; and

1           (2) containing a summary of each proposal  
2           made to the working group pursuant to this section  
3           and whether the Secretary intends to adopt each  
4           proposal.

5 **SEC. 7. GAO REPORT.**

6           (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the  
7 United States shall conduct a comprehensive review of the  
8 passport issuance process, including—

9           (1) the Bureau’s goals for timeliness of pass-  
10 port issuance, the basis for such goals, and its per-  
11 formance compared to those goals;

12           (2) key factors affecting timeliness of passport  
13 issuance and the extent to which the Bureau has ad-  
14 dressed those factors;

15           (3) key factors affecting the implementation of  
16 technological solutions by the Bureau;

17           (4) the Bureau’s efforts to implement the Trav-  
18 el Document Issuance System (TDIS) and other re-  
19 lated information technology systems that support  
20 the passport issuance process with a focus on—

21           (A) whether the Bureau is following lead-  
22 ing practices for developing, acquiring, and  
23 overseeing related system and infrastructure in-  
24 vestments and leveraging existing technologies  
25 where appropriate;

1 (B) whether the program has the work-  
2 force to resolve technical issues within the sys-  
3 tems; and

4 (C) identifying any vulnerabilities and limi-  
5 tations of the system that may impact perform-  
6 ance, including single points of failure;

7 (5) opportunities to streamline, expedite, and  
8 otherwise enhance the Bureau's passport issuance  
9 processes, including opportunities to reduce costs in  
10 the passport issuance process;

11 (6) opportunities to partner with other Federal  
12 and State agencies and leverage existing United  
13 States Government information sources, such as bio-  
14 metric databases, in support of the application and  
15 identity verification and resolution components of  
16 the passport issuance process; and

17 (7) other matters as the Comptroller General  
18 may deem appropriate.

19 (b) SUBMISSION.—Not later than 180 days after the  
20 date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General  
21 shall—

22 (1) brief the appropriate congressional commit-  
23 tees on the review required by subsection (a); and

24 (2) submit a final report upon completion of  
25 such review.



1           (c) RECOMMENDATIONS IMPLEMENTATION RE-  
2 PORT.—Not later than one year after the date on which  
3 the report required by subsection (b)(2) is submitted, the  
4 Assistant Secretary and the Chief Information Officer  
5 shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees  
6 a report on progress toward resolution of each rec-  
7 ommendation made in the report required by such sub-  
8 section and planned steps that will be taken to resolve  
9 each recommendation.

10 **SEC. 8. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

11           Nothing in this Act may be construed as an offer to  
12 procure a service or services or as a guarantee of a con-  
13 tract for such services.

14 **SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.**

15           In this Act—

16           (1) the term “appropriate congressional com-  
17 mittees” means—

18           (A) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and  
19 the Committee on Appropriations of the House  
20 of Representatives; and

21           (B) the Committee on Foreign Relations  
22 and the Committee on Appropriations of the  
23 Senate;

24           (2) the term “Assistant Secretary” means the  
25 Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs;

1           (3) except as otherwise provided, the term “Bu-  
2       reau” means the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the  
3       Department;

4           (4) the term “Chief Information Officer” means  
5       the Chief Information Officer of the Bureau;

6           (5) except as otherwise provided, the term “De-  
7       partment” means the Department of State;

8           (6) the term “passport issuance process”—

9           (A) means all steps of passport issuance  
10       for a new passport or renewal of a passport, as  
11       appropriate, from the applicant’s submission of  
12       documents through document processing and  
13       application adjudication to mailing of printed  
14       passports; and

15          (B) includes—

16           (i) the passport application submis-  
17       sion, which includes—

18           (I) the portion of the passport  
19       issuance process from and including  
20       passport acceptance by a passport ac-  
21       ceptance agent until documents are  
22       received by the Department; and

23           (II) payment processing and mail  
24       shipping times; and

1                   (ii) the passport application proc-  
2                   essing, which includes the portion of the  
3                   passport issuance process from the recep-  
4                   tion of completed applications and their  
5                   distribution to passport agencies for adju-  
6                   dication until finished passports and appli-  
7                   cation documents are mailed to applicants;  
8                   and  
9                   (7) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary  
10                  of State.

