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## SEQUESTRATION TO IMPACT VISA SERVICES

Without Congressional agreement to avoid sequestration on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, the reality of forced budget cuts has set in. Government departments and agencies have begun to identify exactly what the sequestration means for their operations and the services they provide. For the U.S. Department of State, which is responsible for interviewing visa applicants and issuing U.S. visitor and work visas at U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide, sequestration will impact resources devoted to the visa application process.

As early as Wednesday of last week, State Department officials warned of the likely impact of the sequestration on visa services at some of the highest volume posts, such as those in India and China. With a reduction in resources devoted to visa services, applicants may expect longer wait times for visa appointments, longer wait times for biometrics appointments when they are required, and longer time frames for visa issuance following a visa appointment. Travelers should plan ahead to minimize the impact of visa service delays on their travel schedule.

Because U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (CIS) adjudications are a fee-based service, the cost of CIS adjudication services should be covered by user filing fees rather than budgetary allocations. However, given the broad scope of the sequestration, it is likely that reduced resources could impact other departments and agencies involved in immigration-related operations and services. Notably, arrivals at U.S. airports could be delayed through the Customs & Border Protection (CBP) inspection process, so travelers are encouraged to plan ahead for delays navigating the arrival process. Border post arrivals could experience longer lines as well. Additionally, interior enforcement measures by U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) may be impacted, and more detainees may be released to save the cost of their detention.

While the full scope of the sequestration impact is yet unknown, FosterQuan will continue to monitor developments impacting on immigration services and will make future updates available via our [firm's website](#) and future Immigration Updates.©