

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 31, 2018

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to bring your attention to the recently published Washington Post article reporting that there has been a surge in passport denials and revocation for U.S. citizens of Hispanic descent, and who live along the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas. We are even more concerned by reports that the Administration is detaining and deporting U.S. citizens. Many of these individuals previously held U.S. passports and have even served in our Armed Forces. This policy seems arbitrary at its core and if these allegations are correct, would appear heavily based on racial discrimination. We should be making every effort to uphold the civil rights of every individual, regardless of race or ethnicity – not rolling back decades of progress.

A similar policy was previously enacted by the State Department during the George W. Bush Administration, when U.S. citizens in the Rio Grande Valley were having their citizenship questioned and passport applications were being denied at higher rates. According to the Washington Post article, this issue stemmed from claims that a number of “midwives and certain physicians were providing U.S. birth certificates to babies who were actually born in Mexico between the 1950s and the 1990s.” Accordingly, these assertions indicate that the current Administration and its immigration enforcement officials are requiring additional and sometimes difficult to obtain information to prove a person’s citizenship, including evidence of a mother’s prenatal care, baptismal certificates, and rental agreements.

To that extent, we ask that you provide further clarification and answers to the following questions, preferably by Friday, September 7th:

- How many passport renewal applications have been submitted and subsequently denied to U.S. citizens along the U.S.-Mexico border, specifically in Texas, since 2015? How do these application and denial rates compare to others of non-Hispanic descent, particularly those who reside in other parts of the country?
- Is the State Department flagging passport denials and passport revocations for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and/or Customs and Border Protection? How many applicants, whose passports were denied or revoked, have subsequently been taken to detention facilities, and how many have been deported?
- What kind of secondary documents are being required if an applicant’s birth certificate is flagged as fraudulent?

- Beyond the midwives who have been placed on a list for past fraudulent actions, what are the other major reasons for denying an applicant?
- If an applicant is denied a passport renewal, what is the appeals process? What steps does the State Department take to help inform applicants of their right to appeal?
- When an applicant is denied a passport renewal while abroad, what is the process to appeal this decision? What is the average wait time for an appeal? What are the options for this individual to return to the United States, or while they wait for their appeal while abroad?

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving your prompt reply.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Valeria.Carranza@mail.house.gov in Congressman Adriano Espaillat's office or Louise.Bentsen@mail.house.gov in Congressman Vicente Gonzalez's office.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress
New York – 13th District



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress
Texas – 15th District