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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, and 45 Members of the California Congressional Delegation, sent a bipartisan letter today to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calling for immediate action to eliminate the massive passport application backlog causing hardships for millions of U.S. travelers.

"Our passport system is in meltdown," Eshoo said. "Despite having two years to prepare for its new security rule, the Bush Administration isn't even close to being ready to enable Americans to secure the passports they need to comply.

"This is an urgent problem for Californians and Americans across the country who travel internationally for business and vacation, and it deserves an urgent response from the Administration," Eshoo said.

The Administration's new security rule requiring Americans to have passports to travel to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean took effect on January 23rd, two years after it was first announced. Despite the long lead time, the U.S. State Department now has a backlog of 3 million passport applications, including 500,000 that were submitted over three months ago. Processing time has doubled from six weeks to three months.

Eshoo's letter urges Secretary Rice to do "everything in your power to address the issues that led to this crisis and to prevent future ones." The letter recommends opening more passport processing centers across the country and enabling "qualified travelers" to renew their passports on-line.

The bipartisan letter was signed 46 Members of the California Congressional Delegation, including 31 Democrats and 15 Republicans.

The State Department has temporarily relaxed the North American air rule until September 30th to allow travelers to fly from the United States with a valid government-issued photo I.D., such as a driver's license, as well as proof of having applied for a passport.

[Click here to read Eshoo's letter to Secretary Rice.](#)

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