

## Visa Integrity Fee: Implications for Business Travel & Immigration

**Background:** Global business travel is dependent on the efficient movement of international travelers from country to country, of which the United States (U.S.) remains a priority global destination. Allowing an environment that decreases efficiency within the U.S. means a loss of revenue for U.S.-based companies and a decrease in the number of face-to-face meetings. A newly enacted provision in the “One Big Beautiful Bill” (H.R. 1) mandates a \$250 “Visa Integrity Fee” on each issuance of a non-immigrant visa. While the statutory fee takes effect in FY25, its operational rollout and collection mechanism require interagency coordination between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS).

**Issue:** The new Visa Integrity Fee risks further discouraging international business travel to the United States by adding new costs and administrative burdens at a time when visa processing times are already high and travel budgets remain under pressure. While the intent of the fee is to strengthen immigration system oversight, additional fees could create unintended consequences for U.S. economic competitiveness, particularly as other major economies work to streamline entry for business visitors. Beyond business travelers, the fee also affects temporary workers (H-1B, L-1, O-1), seasonal agricultural workers (H-2A/H-2B), and students and exchange visitors (F, M, J) — groups that contribute significantly to U.S. research, innovation, and labor supply chains.

### Timeline & Implementation:

- **October 1, 2025** - Beginning October 1, 2025 (start of FY26), the \$250 baseline fee will be imposed on nonimmigrant visas.
- **FY 2026 onward** – From FY26 onward, the fee will be automatically adjusted for inflation (via Consumer Price Index) unless DHS sets a higher amount by regulation.
- **Refund policy** – Individuals who depart the U.S. on time, avoid status violations, and remain compliant may apply for refunds; the process is not yet defined.
- Key implementation questions remain unresolved: which agency (DOS vs DHS) collects the fee, how and when refunds will be administered, and how the timing aligns with visa stamping processes.

### Who Is Affected & Cost Impact

- The **Visa Integrity Fee covers nearly all nonimmigrant visa categories:** business (B-1/B-2), student (F/M), employment (H-1B, L, O, etc.), exchange (J), and their dependent visas (e.g. H-4, L-2).

- **Applicants from Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries**, who enter under ESTA and do not receive a visa stamp, are **exempt** from this fee.
- Although the law allows for **refunds**, eligibility depends on strict compliance: no unauthorized employment, timely departure or valid status extension, and [full adherence to visa terms](#).
- Because the fee is levied at issuance (i.e., at consular visa stamping), it does **not apply** to routine **change-of-status or extension adjudications within the U.S.** that don't require a new visa stamp abroad.

#### Strategic & Business Travel Implications

- The fee raises the *marginal cost* of sending personnel abroad, renewing visas, or bringing dependents — especially for organizations with multiple foreign nationals.
- For **business travel**, the extra \$250 burden (on top of MRV and other visa fees) may discourage travel or shrink margins on investment in U.S. operations or partnerships.
- **Employment-based migrants** and foreign professionals will face higher transaction costs, and those needing to travel for visa stamping (e.g., after change of status) will have to take on the fee.

GBTA expects the added friction from the increased fee to dampen U.S. competitiveness in attracting foreign talent and reduce the flexibility of global business operations — especially for small and mid-sized organizations.

**Action:** As Congress considers oversight and potential adjustments to the Visa Integrity Fee's implementation GBTA will:

1. Seek an indefinite delay in VIF implementation and work with Congress to enact legislation limiting its application to countries and applicants who have a high likelihood of visa overstays.
2. Monitor the impact of the new fee on business and investment travel to the U.S.
3. Push for transparency and efficiency in how the fee is collected, applied, and refunded.
4. Request exemptions and/or waivers for short-term business travel, conference attendance, and executive meetings are readily available.
5. Increase investment in streamlining visa processing and expanding staffing at consular posts to reduce visa wait times.
6. Engage with international partners to maintain the U.S. position as a premier destination for business and commerce.