

\$14 Fee for travelers from the Visa Waiver Program

A new fee will slightly increase the cost of one of the conveniences frequent travelers have found helpful. On August 9, 2010, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced an "interim" final rule to require travelers from Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries to pay new operational and travel promotion fees. Beginning on September 8, 2010, VWP travelers are to pay these fees when applying for an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA).

For each new ESTA application (as well as each renewal application), the total fee will be \$14. Four dollars of each fee will recover CBP's costs associated with providing and administering the ESTA system. The remaining ten dollars of each fee reflect the mandatory travel promotion fee established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009.

CBA will not accept cash with ESTA applications. Rather, applicants must use credit card or cards to pay all ESTA fees. Currently, the ESTA system only accepts VISA, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover cards, and CBA will not process and application until it receives and verifies all payment information.

The VWP is administered by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The program is available to eligible nationals of 36 designated countries (including Germany, Switzerland and Austria). VWP has made it possible for eligible VWP nationals to travel to the United States and to stay for 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. However, as of January 12, 2010 any VWP national who wishes to participate in the program must obtain an ESTA travel authorization prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the United States.

For further information regarding the VWP, ESTA, or any immigration related matter, you can contact Ellen von Geyso, an attorney at Law in Miami admitted to the practice of law in Germany and Florida. Mrs. von Geyso can be reached at info@vongeyso.com; 305.365.0325. Check out her webpage at www.vongeyso.com.
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