

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 700 INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

*(CT:VISA-1299; 09-15-2009)
(Office of Origin: CA/VO/L/R)*

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 701 PROMPT RESPONSES ESSENTIAL

(CT:VISA-1299; 09-15-2009)

It is most important to promptly answer inquiries from Members of Congress. Posts may respond to inquiries by cable, e-mail, letter, or fax. Posts are reminded that Congressional inquiries must be answered within 3 working days. Implicit in the Congressional inquiry is a desire for a prompt reply. Replies to such inquiries should be courteous and friendly, and the content as fully responsive to the inquirer as possible under the law and regulations. When complete information is not available, an interim message should be sent acknowledging receipt of the Congressional request. *Questions on how to respond to specific Congressional inquiries may be directed to VisaNet@state.gov.*

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 702 COPIES FOR DEPARTMENT

(CT:VISA-1299; 09-15-2009)

Posts should scan copies of Congressional correspondence and responses into the relevant Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) file when the Department requests a copy of the reply or has asked to be informed of developments in the case, *or when the case is likely to result in significant Congressional interest.*

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 703 USE LAYMAN'S LANGUAGE

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Drafters should prepare cables, letters, faxes, or e-mails in unclassified

language intelligible to the layman. Posts should send cables through Department facilities using the format shown in 9 FAM Appendix E, Exhibit I. Drafters should keep in mind that Congressional offices frequently forward post communications directly to the interested constituent.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 704 REPLY TO APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Drafting officers should take special care to ensure that a reply to an inquiry from a Congressional district office is directed to the district office and not to the Washington office of the Member of Congress. When such replies are misdirected, the result is a delay of several days before the reply reaches the proper destination. This often results in the originating office making a follow-up inquiry when a reply has in fact already been sent.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 705 ALWAYS USE REFERENCES

(CT:VISA1056; 10-07-2008)

Drafting officers must ensure that outgoing replies always reference the incoming inquiry.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 706 INCLUDE NAME AND ADDRESS OF CONSTITUENT

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Congressional offices have indicated that including the name and address of the constituent, when known, is helpful to them in locating a case, which often is filed under the name of the constituent rather than the name of the visa applicant.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 707 REFERENCE CODES NOT TO BE USED IN CORRESPONDENCE

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Posts should never use visa reference code words when communicating with Congress since their meanings are not known to Congressional offices.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 708 INCLUDE DATE OF ISSUANCE

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Correspondence regarding visa issuance should always include the date of issuance and, if known, travel plans.

9 FAM APPENDIX E, 709 WHEN NOT TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION

(CT:VISA-1056; 10-07-2008)

Posts cannot communicate information if:

- (1) Information is classified in nature;
- (2) The post has doubts on the subject matter of its reply. (In such cases a letter may be sent to the addressee through the Department under cover of a transmittal slip for Department review and final disposition, or a cable may be sent to the Department requesting that the Department forward the reply to the Congressional office); or
- (3) Messages from the Department specifically request that the reply be sent to the Department. (Posts are reminded to ensure that the cabled reply contains a "State" reference so that the proper officer in the Department will receive it.)
- (4) Further guidance on the information that can be released to requestors can be found in 9 FAM 40.4 N5 Releasing Documents or Information to Visa Applicants.