



AAG

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
of GEOGRAPHERS

Actions Undertaken by the AAG to Support International Travelers to the 2017 Annual Meeting

The AAG has been working hard to assist international travelers in the two months that have passed since the Trump Administration first imposed a ban on foreign entry. While the President's Executive Orders have both been blocked by Federal courts, we have nonetheless taken multiple steps to prepare foreign members and others for their travel to the AAG Annual Meeting and to identify resources should issues arise before and during the Meeting:

- Each Geogram we have sent to international members regarding various aspects of the Annual Meeting has included a link to a page on the AAG website (<http://www.aag.org/annualmeeting/visas>) that includes significant information and tips for international travelers about to prepare themselves before heading to Boston.
- We have also offered to provide an updated, more-detailed letter of invitation to those coming from abroad and over 250 individuals have taken advantage of this.
- We gathered information from various members of the Local Arrangements Committee about resources in and around Boston available to assist international travelers.
- Working with Conference Managers, our meeting planning consultants, we have developed detailed procedures for how we will handle any incidents that arise before or during the Annual Meeting.
- As part of this effort, we will have a dedicated cell phone number – (617) 721-7558 – that international travelers can call if they encounter any problems upon their arrival in the United States. This cell phone will be monitored 24 hours a day.
- We have also been in close contact with the office of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. The Mayor's staff has provided us with additional resources, including the names and contact information for multiple attorneys who have been providing pro-bono assistance at Logan Airport. Among these attorneys are the head of the New England chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the Staff Counsel for the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.
- We have been working with these attorneys to ascertain the latest information about U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) procedures at Logan and tips for travelers coming to Boston for the Annual Meeting. Should any issues arise, we have been asked to email three attorneys who are the official CBP liaisons and who can quickly gather information about any detention or related situation.

- One of these attorneys told us, “Certainly travelers from Muslim majority countries to the U.S. are definitely being questioned more than others; and if there are no issues, we are not seeing any detentions at the airport. The only time we are seeing detentions are if the traveler has an issue with immigration or has a criminal record.”
- The ACLU has put us in contact with a senior attorney at the Boston office of firm Mintz Levin. This individual and her immigration team have provided pro bono assistance in recent international traveler cases at Logan and may be able to help AAG members who encounter difficulties.
- The Trump Administration has challenged the stay of the latest Executive Order to the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond and that Court has set April 5 as the date for a hearing on keeping the stay in place before the larger issues are considered by the Court in May. Even if the 4th Circuit decided to remove the stay on the Trump order imposed by a District Court Judge based in Maryland, the stay from the Hawaii case would remain in effect nationwide, almost certainly throughout the duration of our Annual Meeting.