

ERNST & LINDER
IMMIGRATION ALERT
DECEMBER 2008

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1. Electronic Travel Authorization Required Prior to Travel for Citizens of all Visa Waiver Program Countries Beginning January 12, 2009.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced that beginning January 12, 2009, eligible citizens from all Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries, such as France, Germany, Austria or Switzerland, must obtain online approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to traveling to the United States under the VWP.

The ESTA can be obtained online free of charge in a matter of minutes. It is valid for 2 years and for multiple entries from its date of issuance or until the expiration date of the passport used to apply, whichever comes first. Therefore, Ernst & Linder LLC would like to encourage its friends and clients eligible for the VWP to apply for ESTA as soon as a trip to the United States as a business or pleasure visitor for less than 90 days is anticipated. Confirmed reservations are not needed to apply. Just log on to <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> and follow the instructions.

This new regulation does not affect holders of valid U.S. visitor visas (such as B-1/B-2) or employment visas (such as H-1B, L-1, E-1 or E-2), even if they are citizens of countries participating in the VWP.

2. Seven New Countries Join the Visa Waiver Program.

Since November 17, 2008, citizens of Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, South Korea, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia no longer need a visa to visit the United States as a business or pleasure visitor for less than 90 days. They are now part of the VWP, like most other European Union countries, and their citizens will be only required to apply for ESTA to visit the United States, as detailed above.

We remain at your entire disposal to answer any questions you may have regarding the new ESTA process or any other issue.