The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. Visa Interviews Waived for Some

March 10, 2012

Certain Russian citizens will now be eligible to obtain a tourist visa for travel to the United States without having to go for an interview, the U.S. Embassy said in a press release on its website.

The new rules apply to those who have already been granted a visa that expired within the 47 months preceding the current application. Previously, the rule applied only to visa holders whose visa had expired up to 11 months before the new application.

The statement also makes clear that the new rule does not universally exempt eligible applicants from the interview, and consular officers retain the authority to interview any applicant who they determine "requires a personal appearance."

The move comes as part of President Barack Obama's executive order to increase tourism and travel to the United States.

In November, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton exchanged diplomatic notes regarding an agreement to simplify the visa regime between the two countries.

A proposal that would allow Russian and American tourists to receive multiple entry visas valid for three years still needs to be ratified by the State Duma before it can take effect.

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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/03/10/us-visa-interviews-waived-for-some-a13134